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Detective Crawley's Nerve

Or, Playing a Trump Card

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CHAPTER I.

A PROPHECY THAT CAME TRUE.

"I MUST see him, I tell you! It is a case of life and death. Let me come in!"

James Crawley immediately put his coffee cup back on the table. He had had only a couple of hours' sleep after a strenuous night spent on a baffling case. As it was his policy to strike while the iron was hot, he expected to spend the new day in furthering the work upon which he happened to be engaged.

He had really just sat down at the little table in his private room, whereon his man had placed a fragrant cup of Java, two boiled eggs and a plate of buttered toast, the latter covered with a snowy napkin, when these stirring words floated to his ears. They came from the direction of the front door, whither Phillip had gone in answer to a violent ring of the electric bell.

Crawley had wonderful hearing. He instantly recognized the voice as belonging to Rudolph Van Winkle, a young society man whom he had long known as a good-natured fellow, whose failings were probably no worse than the majority of his class could boast.

Undoubtedly Mr. Van Winkle must have some pretty strong excuse for visiting the detective at such an early hour in the morning. Perhaps Crawley was not very much surprised. He had a faculty for knowing more about the secret affairs of men than they ever dreamed possible.

"Philip!" he called out.

"Yes, sir!"

"Show the gentleman in!"

And a few seconds later Van Winkle entered the curious little den, or study, or office—whatever one chose to call it. Some men there were who believed the cozy retreat to be in the nature of a torture chamber; for here they had been put on the grill by the famous sleuth, and made to confess their shortcomings.

Van Winkle was not looking well this morning. In fact, he had all the appearance of a man who had been upon what, in the language of the streets, is termed a "bat." In a word, he seemed to be all broken up, for his face was haggard, his eyes heavy and bloodshot, and his hand trembled when he took the extended palm of the detective.

"Sit down, Van."

Mumbling something that may have been thanks, the visitor obeyed.

Crawley was eying him sharply. Doubtless that analytical mind of his was making mental comments on the appearance of the usually fastidious Van Winkle.

"Now, what is it, my friend?"

The other drew a long breath.

"Say, I'm deuced lucky to have found you home at this ungodly hour, Mr. Crawley."

Even while speaking he seemed to throw off a little of his nervousness. Perhaps part of it had arisen from his fear lest the detective might be away; and that in such a case he would not really know what to do.

"It was a mere accident, for a fact. Ordinarily you would have had to come again. But I imagine that this is the first occasion you've seen the sun rise for a long stretch, Van."

"That's a fact," with a dreary smile and a shudder that did not escape the sharp eye of the detective.

"Turning over a new leaf?" he went on softly, as if inviting a confession.

"After this I will, I swear by everything I hold sacred! That is, if I get the chance before they send me to the chair!"

No wonder the detective's eyebrows went up at this.

"Come, you've possibly overshot the mark last night and taken too much of the bubble water. I've seen men near the border of delirium tremens, and they always act this way."

But Van Winkle would have none of it. He shook his head violently in the negative.

"You don't understand, Crawley. Wait till I muster up enough grit to tell you the worst. I've been roaming the streets for nearly three hours, afraid to go to my rooms lest I find an officer there waiting to tap me on the shoulder and lead me off. My God! what haven't I suffered in that time? Three hours? Yes, by the clock, but it's been as many years to me!"

Again the eyebrows of the detective went up.

His busy mind was putting two and two in line, and light was beginning to dawn upon his vision.

"Something is worrying you seriously, then, Van. You talk of policemen and jail as though you had reason to dread facing either. And I'm beginning to believe that there is something more in your actions than a mere attack of jimjams."

"Oh! if it were only that I could stand it. There would be a chance of a cure. As it is, nothing but disgrace and a terrible punishment stare me in the face."

"What have you been doing?"

"I hardly know how to tell you, Mr. Crawley; it is so shameful, so utterly disgusting. I was warned that if I kept on my carousing I'd reach some bad end; but I only laughed at my good old aunt. Now, her dismal prophecy seems about to come true. But I swear I'll never live to expiate the thing in the chair."

"Perhaps I could make a venture, and strike near the truth, Van," suggested the detective, quietly.

The other stared at him aghast.

"Great heavens! what is hidden from you, Crawley? Don't tell me it is common property, and that the order has already gone out to nab me?"

He was almost pitiable in his mental distress; and knowing that Van Winkle was at heart quite a decent young chap, even though wild, the detective could not feel anything but sympathy for him. Contempt he never experienced toward the weak brother who had sinned.

"Tell me, Van, is it in connection with a certain friend of yours that you are worried this way?"

"Yes," muttered the staring visitor.

"Allan Thorndyke?"

"Heavens, it is so!"

"He was found dead on the street early this morning, with his head crushed in by a brick!"

Van Winkle was beyond making a sound, excepting a great sigh that seemed to well up from the depths of his tortured heart. But he nodded in the affirmative, still keeping his bloodshot eyes glued on that face of the great detective, to whom he had come in his despair.

"Were you with Thorndyke last night, Van?"

Another nod.

"Until very late?"

"We were making a night of it. First at a soiree, and then to sit in at a friendly game with two other wild blades. It was after three when we started home."

"Yes. You are getting on bravely. Don't stop. You understand that I must know all if you expect me to be of any assistance."

"Both of us were pretty well strung; and most men in that condition are either jolly or quarrelsome."

"I know that as a fact; and also that Thorndyke had the reputation of being exceedingly touchy, and ready to get into a row when he had tippled too much."

"Yes; and unfortunately I am inclined the same nasty way. With a good-natured fellow nothing comes of it; but let two sour, ugly-tempered men, half-seas over, get into a quarrel, and nobody can tell what will happen," with a shudder.

"Well, you started home?"

"There was no conveyance, so we thought we would walk. Both of us agreed it would do us good, and clear the cobwebs from our addled brains a little. But that was the sum total of our seeing alike. We snapped at each other like a couple of mangy dogs. It seemed as if half a dozen times we stopped, and dared each other to fight. Then we would go on again, mumbling and feeling sore toward each other."

"Yes, I understand. And finally?"

"We must have reached the exploding stage. I have only a dim conception of our struggling there on the pavement like a pair of Kilkenny cats. It was shameful! I don't believe I ever reached that low estate before; and whether I live through this or not, I swear I'll never give the devil another chance to get me!"

"Well, what do you distinctly remember?"

"While my mind is still hazy, I can feel Allan slipping from my grip—I shall always feel it in imagination. The next thing I knew I was bending over him there, staring in horror at his crushed head, and the brick that was covered with crimson! I had in my drunken frenzy snatched up whatever came to my hand, and smashed the poor fellow on the skull!"

Crawley said nothing, while he sat and surveyed his terrorized caller. He wanted the frightful nature of Van Winkle's situation to present itself fully to the other's mind, before he ventured to probe the mystery, searching for those clews which might always be found by one clever enough to know where to look.

CHAPTER II.

BY WHOSE HAND?

"NOW, tell me what you did next?"

Van Winkle brushed his hands across his face; it was the despairing gesture of a horrified man, who would endeavor to put away a spectacle that haunted him, and was likely to do so the balance of his life.

"I hardly know. I remember wanting to shriek out, and call the police. Then my mood changed, for by this time I had become wholly sobered. A wild desire to escape now began to tempt me to flee. I must have time to ponder the dreadful situation over, perhaps find some one to advise me."

"You fled?"

"I was that great a coward, Mr. Crawley. Instead of facing the music like a man, I ran away. But there was no peace for me. I suffered the tortures of a spirit in Hades as the long minutes dragged by; while I dodged about the streets, and shuddered every time I saw a blue coat and brass buttons. A more contemptible villain never was born than I felt then."

Crawley smiled a trifle, but the other did not see this, for his eyes were fastened on the pattern in the Oriental rug. Presently Rudolph spoke again.

"I guess I thought of everything that ever happened to me in my entire life, during that time. Finally I made up my mind that you were the only man in all New York who could help me. And as soon as I dared, I came here. That's all!"

"You're mistaken, Van; that's only the beginning. Now, pay attention to me, and try to collect your senses, so as to answer my questions the best you know how."

"How good this is of you, Mr. Crawley! Really, I didn't know but what you would think it your duty to chase me off to the station-house just as soon as I admitted I was with poor Allan."

"You seem to remember struggling with him?"

"Oh! yes, I could swear to that," replied the other, apparently failing to see how such an admission was apt to tell heavily against him, if ever he were placed on trial for the murder of his friend.

"But you do not remember striking him with any object whatever?"

"I have cudgeled my poor brains the best I knew how, just to try and remember the least thing about that, but it all seems a blank!"

"And you cannot recollect having seen that fatal brick before the second your eyes fell upon it, lying there alongside Thorndyke, and one end of it covered with his blood?"

"I do not remember a thing about it. And the only conclusion I've been able to draw was, that at the time I picked it up I must have been out of my senses far enough not to realize what I was doing. But the awful shock of seeing him lying there all bloody brought me suddenly to myself again. But did I say that only one end of the brick was stained?"

"No, you did not happen to mention it; but I took note of that fact myself!"

"What! Have you seen him lying there, Mr. Crawley?"

Words could not picture the astonishment, almost awe, with which Van Winkle cried out in this fashion. He stared at his companion as though once again he had begun to believe Crawley must be allied with the spirits of necromancy.

"Yes. It happened that as I was returning home after accomplishing certain matters connected with a very important case, I stumbled upon the body. Two night bulls had just found it, and were trying to ascertain what it all meant."

"How wonderful!"

"Of course they knew me, and were only too glad to have me advise what should be done. So I was enabled to examine the situation before they called for the patrol wagon to carry the dead man to the station. And in that way naturally I noticed the brick that had caused Thorndyke's taking-off, and Van, that same brick plays the most important part in this horrible affair. It is our trump card, our mute witness of the tragedy. If that same brick could only be made to speak, how easily would all be cleared up!"

"Every word you say is the truth, Crawley, but who can make this same dumb witness tell the facts? If any man can, it will be you, my friend. But from what you say you must have suspected what brought me here so early, looking as though I had been seeing a ghost?"

"I caught a suspicion very soon after you came. In the first place, I remembered that Thorndkye and you were often seen together."

"Yes, and while we quarreled when we had been drinking, I swear to you, sir, we were always the best of friends otherwise. Why, I would have done almost anything for Allan. And to think that, when out of my mind I should be guilty of this terrible thing."

"You seem determined to stand for the tragedy, Rudolph. Nobody has accused you as yet, but you are apparently ready to acknowledge the crime, and take your punishment."

"Because it is utterly impossible that any one else could have done it. Didn't I confess to you that we were struggling at the time, and I felt him slipping down in a horribly suggestive way, just as though the life had suddenly left him! Ugh! What a fool, what a dolt I have been! And now I must take my medicine."

He groaned aloud, and clutched the arms of his chair. If Rudolph Van Winkle had sinned much he was certainly paying up for it all now. The sternest apostle of justice could ask for no more severe punishment than the agony of mind he was enduring.

"Wait! There may be a gleam of hope still!"

"Oh! bless you for saying that, Mr. Crawley. It all looks blank to me; but you know how to handle these things better than any living man. What is it you see to found your hope on, sir?"

"Perhaps several things. Let us examine the first that comes to me. And you yourself have brought it forward, all unconsciously."

"Please tell me, then. You have aroused just the faintest spark of hope in my soul. What did I say?"

"Twice now, in speaking about your sensations at the time this happened, you have referred to the fact that you felt his body slipping from your embrace as though life had suddenly been snatched from its earthly tenement!"

"Yes, yes, that is so. And I also said I would never forget the awful creepy sensation as the first suspicion that he had fainted, or was dead, passed over me."

"Be very sure now—you swear that as you clasped him in your arms you felt this?"

"Yes, I can take my oath to that, sir!"

"Meaning both arms?"

"Certainly. I could not have held him with one!"

"And if that be true, pray tell me how you picked up that brick, and delivered the terribly forceful blow that sank it into his skull?"

Van Winkle stared at him for a few seconds, as though his befogged brain could hardly grasp the tremendous significance of that question. Then over his ghastly though eager face there swept a fierce expression of awakening joy.

He gripped the fingers of the detective, and squeezed them like a savage; not content with that the almost hysterical man actually bent his head and kissed the back of Crawley's hand.

"Oh! God bless you for that ray of hope. If only it would appear that I am innocent of this awful crime, I would shout for joy, and lead a different life. There is a chance then? If both my arms were tight around poor old Allan, I couldn't possibly have picked up that thing and struck him, could I?"

"Hardly. And in the beginning I was careful to ask if you recollected seeing that brick before you found it there, stained with his blood. And you said you had tried to remember, and could not."

"It is the truth, I pledge you my word! And I would confess to it if I knew anything contrariwise, Mr. Crawley; you believe that don't you?"

"Yes I do, Van. For you seemed to be trying the best you knew to understand just how you had done it; without ever once trying to avoid the penalty. Now that you realize what I am driving after, do you still stick to the same story?"

"More than ever. I was positively grappling with him at the time. Both my arms were around him. Why, if it hadn't been so, he would have fallen in a heap. As it was, I lowered him to the pavement!"

The detective nodded his head. He seemed satisfied that he had made no mistake in his diagnosis; for an up-to-date sleuth finds it just as necessary to form an opinion as to the cause and nature of the disease he is about to attack, as any physician ever can.

"Once more, think hard, Rudolph. It means everything to you. While you were struggling with Thorndyke in that half-drunken manner, can you remember any one approaching you?"

"No. I saw no one."

"Still, you were at the time in hardly a condition to see very much. And again, possibly some one might have crept up behind your back without your being any the wiser?"

Van Winkle appeared to consider this.

"It might possibly be so, but all the same I doubt it, sir," he replied presently.

"Well, you are a queer fellow, I must say. It strikes me that there are few men who, with their life trembling in the balance, would not be constrained to seize upon the flimsiest hope, and magnify it. And yet here you say you doubt whether such a thing could have happened. I must say that you love the truth, no matter how weak you may have been in other respects, son."

"But I didn't see any one; and while what you say might be possible, it strikes me as improbable. But you know better than I do, sir; and I'm content to leave my case wholly in your hands, hoping and praying I may crawl out of this horrible pit without too much disgrace for my people."

"Then did you hear any sound besides what you and Thorndyke might have made while scuffling?"

He saw Van Winkle start, and show sudden interest.

"Why, yes, I did, now that you mention it."

"Ah! what was its character in a general way?"

"I thought I heard a gruff voice call out; but up to now the thing had utterly passed from my mind. You see, I was wholly wrapped up in trying to realize how I did that foul thing; and I never once allowed myself to suspect there might be another."

"Well, I am positive that there was another person near you, right then and there; and it is going to be my part of the job to discover his identity."

"Yes, yes, how you cheer me up when you say that. I can never thank you enough, Mr. Crawley."

"Don't try—yet. Wait until we make some sort of discovery. You must go to your rooms, and to bed. If you find a few tiny stains of blood on your garments do nothing to wash them out; for that would appear to be evidence of guilt!"

"I understand, sir. And you want me to remain quiet until I hear from you; or else they come to take me before the coroner?"

"Yes; but you will not be troubled very soon. I shall see to that. To hark back again to that minute when you were tussling with Allan; could you give me any idea as to what direction the shout came from?"

"I could not, sir."

"Then you have no recollection as to whether it came from back of you, to one side, or even above?"

"Not if I were placed on my oath could I say more than that I seemed to hear a startled cry; and then I felt him grow limp in my grasp, as I hugged him in my drunken fashion."

"Do you know whether Thorndyke had any enemies?"

"I never knew it if he did. He was a very attractive chap, you understand, and had many friends; both among the men of our set, and the women as well."

"Do you know whether he was paying attentions to any lady in particular?"

"Well, perhaps I could hardly say that, for he was quite a beau; but latterly I've understood that he talked a good deal of his admiration for Miss Tremaine—Doris, the daughter of old General Tremaine. But then it was also known that Doris was as good as engaged to Jack Jenks."

"Do you mean John Alexander Jenks, the young electrician, who is beginning to make a name for himself in scientific circles, and who has worked with Marconi on some of the wizard's great inventions?"

"Why, yes, that is the man, and a fine fellow, too. He will make Doris a good husband," mumbled Van Winkle, not noticing the frown that had come upon the detective's brow.

Crawley had reason for looking grave, since he remembered distinctly that he had met that same John Jenks just five minutes before he stumbled over the body of Allan Thorndyke, with the two night officers examining their grewsome find!

CHAPTER III.

AN OUTLAWED WITNESS.

SOMETIMES the most trivial incident may assume stupendous proportions, when taken in connection with other matters. When Crawley, for instance, had chanced to run across the young inventor at three o'clock in the morning, he had spoken to him in passing, and thought no more of the accidental meeting. But since learning that he and Allan Thorndyke both loved the same girl, whom Crawley also chanced to know very well, the presence of John Jenks within a block of where his rival lay weltering in his own blood, was terribly significant!

Yes, and harking instantly back to the incident, the detective remembered now that there was certainly something a little out of the ordinary in the way the other had answered his casual salutation as they passed. He had even turned his head and noticed that John had been doing the same—looking after him! Was it an expression of apprehension he had seen on the face of the young man, who seemed destined soon to become famous as a second Tesla, an Edison, or a Marconi? It certainly might be deemed such, in the light of more recent developments.

Despite all that Van Winkle had said, it was possible for some one to have crept up close to the struggling pair. Neither of them at the time chanced to be in a condition capable of noting such a fact.

The thought was thrilling, almost beyond belief; for if all he knew and had heard about John Jenks were true, he was a young man in ten thousand, utterly incapable of perpetrating such a horrible thing as this. And yet, who can say what temptation might not come to a man whose sweetheart was in danger of being stolen, through the superior attractions of a much more handsome and attractive fellow?

At any rate this was a clew worth following up. Innocent or guilty, the movements of John Jenks during the latter part of the night just passed must possess new interest for this man of clews and trails.

"Do you want to ask me anything more, Mr. Crawley?"

"Only this. Have you ever heard that Jenks made any threat toward Thorndyke?"

"Great Cesar! You don't suppose he would ever be low enough to attempt such a thing as murder, do you?"

"I suppose nothing. It is my business simply to follow up the slightest clew that offers. Please answer my question."

"Do you demand it?" as if reluctant to reply.

"I certainly do. Have you any reason to believe that Thorndyke and Jenks were at loggerheads?"

"Why, Allan told me he wouldn't be surprised if he had trouble with Jenks some fine day. You see, that was his failing. He simply couldn't help being fascinating, and the girls all admired him so. But strange to say, the ones who were free did not seem to have so much attraction for Allan as those who

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Look out for the leaders in next week's Ledger, "BETWEEN WORLDS; or HOW AN AVIATOR WON," and "THE HIDDEN COBRA; or, A BASKET FROM INDIA." They are great, thrilling stories and you must not miss them.

We have on hand many splendid stories awaiting publication. Among them:

"Complications of Fate," by Emma Howard Wight; "The Unwritten Law," by J. G. Howser; "Anti-Gravity Airship Company," by Stephen A. Cox; "Loaded Dice," by Will Lisenbee; "Beauty and the Beast," by Granville Osborne; "Treasures of the Mountains," by Thomas P. Montford; "The Princess Zithena," by A. M. Freeman; "The Young Circus King," by Weldon J. Cobb.

We could enumerate many more, but have not the space. We want to assure the Ledger readers that it will be distinctly worth while for them to subscribe for this paper, or continue taking it from our agents during the next year.

were engaged. And he was trying his best to cut Jenks out with the old General's pretty daughter."

"That will do. Say not a word of this to a living soul! or you may be doing a grave injustice to an exceedingly bright young man, who is devoting his early years to study and work, while most of his class are trying to diminish the visible supply of strong drink."

"You are right, sir. I deserve everything you can say of me. Only, I swear to you, if I'm lucky enough to crawl out of this nightmare pit, it's back to the straight and narrow way for Rudolph."

"Well, I am through my breakfast, and you need some sleep. Suppose, after all, you stay here for the present. They may be looking for you, knowing that you were with Allan last night; and if you were met on the streets, some officious plain-clothes man might think it his duty to run you in, on general principles."

"Could you give me a bed, Mr. Crawley? That would be the finest thing going. Why, under your roof I'd feel that I was as safe as in a fort."

Philip appeared in the doorway. No doubt he had been signaled in some fashion, unseen by the visitor. For that matter, Crawley may even, with his foot, have pressed a button in the floor.

"Philip, show my young friend, Mr. Van Winkle, to a room upstairs. He is going to stop with us for a short time, and is in need of rest. The blue room, Philip."

"Yes, sir."

Rudolph accompanied the discreet man-servant out of the little den of the great detective.

He would doubtless have spoken his thanks once more, only that he saw the forefinger of Crawley pressed on his lips. That meant discretion, silence, and he forebore. Philip was no doubt perfectly trustworthy; but the fewer in possession of a secret the better.

And after Rudolph had gone, the detective sat there without moving for some time. Undoubtedly he was seriously thinking, rallying all the significant facts connected with this remarkable case before him, and then discarding those that his wise judgment pronounced useless. Finally he sat up, and took something out of his pocket, at which he looked long and earnestly.

To Van Winkle the bit of polished steel would have represented nothing on earth. Had he been asked what it was, he might have given a score of guesses, and then been wide of the truth. But it would require only one glance on the part of an experienced thief-taker to recognize a clever little tool used to pick locks, and carried by nearly every burglar and sneak-thief at large. And just then Jim Crawley was wondering whether the fact that he had found this stray tool, much in vogue among the criminal classes, within three feet of the dead form of Allan Thorndkye could have any possible bearing on the solution of the tragedy.

Picking up a magnifying glass from a nearby desk, he proceeded to examine the bit of steel at closer range. He was looking for a telltale mark that would give him a clew as to the former owner of the pick-lock.

Crawley had occasion to know that many experienced burglars carry an expensive kit of tools adapted to the peculiarities of their profession. He had seen many an outfit worth considerable money, really gems of art in their way; and the owners were as jealous of letting any of their implements go out of their possession as a man who pursued a hobby could be of his prize curios.

He also knew that in many cases these tools carried the distinguishing mark of the owner, minutely scratched in some obscure place, in order that he could identify his own property should his outfit get mixed with that of a pal. And his scrutiny did not go without its reward. He found three tiny crosses that had been scratched upon the polished surface of the pick-lock.

Crawley smiled. It was at least a pleasure to find his suspicion confirmed in this way, even though he were no nearer the solution of the puzzle than before. He knew who the owner of the lost tool was.

"I'm not surprised. Somehow I seemed to expect it belonged to Slim Jim Carey. His tools always have a look peculiar to themselves; for they tell me he used to be a crackerjack of a mechanic, and that he makes everything himself. This proves it. I've seen those three crosses before, when we took him in. He escaped with a light sentence then, and has been at large a year or more. But the question is: What was Slim Jim Carey doing near where those two fools wrestled; and did he see the murder?"

That the burglar might have done the terrible deed himself did not seem to enter into the calculations of the sleuth for a moment. Perhaps the fact that no robbery was attempted caused him to dismiss this possibility.

But at least there remained the chance that Slim Jim might know something about it! Perhaps he had been hovering around in hopes of a chance to go through the pockets of the two drunken young nabobs. In that case he could have seen any one who crept up close enough to crash that brick down on the head of the unfortunate Thorndyke.

Like most of his class, Slim Jim had a dislike for becoming mixed up in a murder case; his reputation would hardly admit of his turning witness; and besides, the police might be looking for him on some old charge.

Presently the detective arose. He had put the little steel clew away in some pocket, and was preparing to issue forth, as though his mind had been made up with regard to his next work.

It was very seldom that accident had anything to do with the carrying out of James Crawley's plans. As a rule, most of his actions were the deliberate result of his deductions; and he was in the habit of mounting upward steadily, just like one might climb a flight of stairs, until he found victory at the top. And yet, when the opportunity presented itself, he was always ready to avail himself of the chance to pick up points.

On this occasion the opening came in a most remarkable manner, so far as coincidence went. He was passing a great dry goods emporium on Broadway, when he heard his name spoken in a woman's voice.

"Why, Mr. Crawley, to think of meeting you just now!" was what caused him to turn, and immediately feel a thrill of satisfaction; for the speaker was no other than Doris Tremaine, daughter of the old General, and the girl, who, betrothed to John Jenks, had, according to Van Winkle, been fluttering in the dazzling glow of handsome Allan Thorndyke's attentions!

And apparently she was unusually glad to see Crawley.

And the brick that was covered with crimson.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

DETECTIVE CRAWLEY had an inspiration. As a rule, in cases of this kind, he yielded to such sudden impulses. They nearly always brought results that furthered his plans.

Here was Miss Tremaine. According to the light he had on the subject, Doris would sooner or later prove to be the central figure around which revolved those others fated to make up what, in his mind, he had already called the Thorndyke mystery.

The man who had been so strangely killed, and the one whose presence in that vicinity shortly after the diabolical crime had been committed were rivals for her affection. John Jenks, the serious-minded young inventor, had apparently the inside track; but, according to accounts the dashing Thorndyke had been making rapid progress recently. Here then was a cause!

There is no element more potent in the world's tragedies than jealously. Then why not seize this fortunate chance to have a few minutes' chat with the pretty young woman? He could in some manner introduce the subject of the two young men, and possibly draw forth information that might afford him a valuable clew.

What if he learned, for instance, that John and Doris had recently quarreled about the attentions of Thorndyke? That would possess terrible significance just now. If John was engaged to this bright girl, he would naturally object to her receiving attentions from the handsome beau.

Whether the offended lover could descend to such a depth as to wish for the taking-off of his rival was a question that as yet did not demand an answer. Crawley believed in crossing bridges only when he came to them.

He accepted the little gloved hand of Miss Tremaine with apparent pleasure.

"I am a very busy man, you understand, and seldom find time to visit any of my friends. But for some weeks I have actually been thinking of calling at your house. The General gave me a warm invitation the day I met him down in Wall street. Besides I wished to congratulate you, if what I hear is true."

She blushed, as was natural, at his allusion to her engagement. But unless he found himself mistaken, which was seldom the case, there was a shade of annoyance, or something similar, in her manner.

"Do you know Mr. Jenks?" she asked, with sudden eagerness, he thought.

"Just to speak and nod to, when we happen to meet," was his reply.

And even while saying this it flashed through his mind under what significant circumstances the last meeting between them took place—time about three on a cold, cheerless morning—place, within a block of where the body of poor Thorndyke lay weltering in gore!

She glanced around her with sparkling eyes; and this man who was so accustomed to reading the mind of others knew instinctively that a sudden suggestion had come to her. Doubtless this unexpected encounter with a friend whom she knew as a detective, and whom her sage father trusted so implicity, had given her what might also be called an inspiration.

Crawley smiled. After all he might not be compelled to put his own idea into force, because Doris was about to forestall him!

"Mr. Crawley, would you think it strange if I asked for a few minutes of your time? I am in trouble, and was just puzzling my poor head as to where I might find an adviser; when lo and behold, you appeared, it seems to me, as though in answer to my prayer."

"Why, with the greatest pleasure in the world, Miss Doris. Where shall we talk?"

"My car is just around the corner, where I told Shamus to wait for me. It is a limousine, and if we speak in ordinary tones the chauffeur cannot hear a word we say," she suggested, her eyes sparkling.

"A clever idea, indeed. Allow me to escort you to it, then, Miss Doris."

During the few minutes that it took them to thread their way among the crowds thronging the streets, and arrive at the spot where the elegant car of the wealthy General stood, the detective revolved many things in that active brain of his. Fortune was working overtime to aid him in his hunt for a clew, it seemed, even to waylaying him on the arteries of travel.

What could be troubling this beautiful society girl? Apparently she had everything heart could wish—beauty, health, wealth, and a lover whose name was certain presently to be acclaimed as that of a genus. Still, she was unhappy. He could see that in the serious expression which settled down upon her face as they walked together.

It would be impossible to guess what she wanted to consult him about, for the field was an unlimited one. All Crawley could make sure of was that in some way it must concern her relations with those two aspirants for her hand, Jenks and Thorndyke.

Could she have any intimation that trouble had come? Had some enterprising paper printed an extra to record the finding of Thorndkye's body; and could a copy have reached her hand?

He knew that was utterly out of the question. In a short time the news would be flashed broadcast, and become the talk of the clubs; but not yet. He would certainly have known it.

For some good reason it must have been withheld from the searching eyes of the police reporters who make early calls at the various stations to secure accounts of all arrests during the preceding night.

"There it is!" said Doris, pointing.

And so they reached the closed car.

"Remain here, Shamus. I am not through shopping at this point," remarked the girl, as she allowed her companion to assist her into the car.

Shamus was a discreet chauffeur, as well as an experienced one. He simply sat there like a mummy, and awaited the pleasure of the dainty little lady whom he adored as his mistress.

The roar of Broadway was not quite so tremendous at this point; still from front and rear came enough of the rumble to deaden sounds to a great extent. Inside that inclosed car they could converse without any danger of Shamus hearing a word. And when he had seen to closing the door carefully, Crawley turned toward his fair companion, with a smile of curiosity on his face.

"That is a plain invitation for me to explain," she observed, half laughingly.

"I am ready to listen attentively, and if I can be of any assistance, believe me, you have only to ask, Miss Doris," he replied.

"I was disappointed when you said that you only knew Mr. Jenks to speak to," she began.

"Yes."

"Because my father says that of all the men he ever met, none can compare with Mr. Crawley in judging people and reading character."

"I ought to thank the General for that high compliment, little though I believe I deserve it. But from what you say I imagine that you would like me to tell you what I thought of your—Mr. Jenks I mean."

"Please understand in the start that he is my lover, and that we have been engaged for some time. I think our affection for each other is of the true type. Still, John is so different from all other young men I know, that now and then I am puzzled to account for his actions."

"Yes, quite natural. It is often the case, I assure you. In time you will know him better. I have heard only the best of things about him."

"But, Mr. Crawley, what can I think when he fails to keep an engagement with me, and leaves me to wait all evening alone? It is true, he says he sent a message, telling me he was unavoidably detained; but if so it never reached me. Oh! I was provoked, naturally; but Mr. Crawley, that was not the worst."

She had her hands on his sleeve now, and her starry eyes, in which traces of tears of mortification gleamed looked into his own orbs.

"When was this dreadful neglect perpetrated?" he asked, as though amused.

"I know it may appear a trifle to you, Mr. Crawley; and if he had explained this morning when he came to the house to see me, that must have been the end of it."

"This morning, you say? Do you mean that it was last night he failed to appear at your house?"

"Yes, and we had a very particular engagement, too. But he looked so broken up when he came in, as if he had not slept at all, and put me off so strangely when I asked him what had kept him away, that really, Mr. Crawley, I don't know what to think. I have even wondered if Jack could be going out of his mind from overstudy!"

But the detective was conscious of a sudden cold chill in the region of his heart, as if an icy hand had been laid there.

Last night—a broken engagement with his sweetheart—looked as though he had not slept all night—surely these things possessed a dreadful significance in connection with the facts that he already knew!

The continuation of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

Damaged By the Storm.

Stranger—"Did the late storm do much damage in this section?"

Farmer Meadow—"Did it? I should say it did. It rained so hard that my wife and six darters, who got caught in it, rushed into the Cross Roads store an' bought seven umbrellas an' had 'em charged to me."

Rich Men's Sons

Or, *The War of the Prodigals*. By Geo. T. Hargreaves

"When do you begin work?"

[Copyright 1913 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

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CHAPTER VI.

THE TRANSFORMATION.

DICK DANSBEY, from birth a smiling, care-free, irresponsible rich man's son, underwent an astonishing transformation under the smart of the crack from Ariston's car. A new light burned in his mellow eyes, a strange desire rankled in his heart, an industrious activity stirred his brain.

The blow from his rival's automobile acted much as the surgeon's knife upon the depressed brain of a slow-thinking, slothful, or a sinister child. It drove out the easy-going, the lackadaisical, the pleasure-loving disposition. In its place was implanted purpose, energy, and ambition.

The covert thrust of Ariston, in fact, had turned to rend only himself. It had converted his antagonist from a drone into a worker. Dansbey tried to forget the pains of his injuries in the more acute incentive of his sudden itch to do something.

Jane Haverstraw, ignorant of the revolutionary change that Dick had undergone, moved deeply by the scene through which she had just passed with Ariston, turned to the limp and plastered figure of Dansbey with eyes alive with sympathy.

"Dick, I believe you," she grieved, "yet it seems impossible to think that Philip could be such a—a coward."

"Oh, let's forget that," Dansbey smiled painfully. Nerve-ragged and strength-spent, he reeled rather than walked to a seat.

"You're ill, Dick," exclaimed the girl, apprehensively, as she followed and put forth one hand to aid him. "Let me call around a car and take you home."

"I'd like jolly well to have you take me home," he responded jerkily. "But I came down here to say something to you tonight. I had it all thought out, too, till that crack drove everything out of my head—everything but fight."

"Save what you've got to say for another time," suggested Jane, naively.

"Maybe there won't be any other time," and Dick shook his head soberly. "Come sit down here beside me and listen—if you can." He patted the divan to show where he wished her.

Miss Haverstraw gracefully sank to the spot indicated. Intuitively her mind went back to the preceding half hour in which she had rebuffed the proposal of Philip Ariston. She began to wonder how she would meet the proposal of Dick Dansbey. She found herself fretting under the request of her father to withhold her decision for six months—until the two suitors had proved their worth as prospective wife supporters.

"You see," the young man went on, as he screwed the unscratched side of his face into an embarrassed smile, "I'm about to plunge into the abyss of the submerged, Jane. In other words, I'm starting to work at the bottom. I suppose I won't be on very intimate terms with good clothes for quite a while. Accordingly, I won't be able to encroach upon your attention."

"Dick, do be sensible," the girl cautioned charmingly; "don't you know me well enough to know that it isn't good clothes that I esteem most in my friends?"

"Well, it won't be right for me to keep butting in on your time," insisted the young man.

"Dick!" Jane warned sharply.

"I haven't any business here," he continued, undismayed by her grieved looks. "Oh, I'm wise to your father's scheme this afternoon. It hit me like a blow between the eyes. I'm seeing stars yet. He's right. I'm a useless, good-for-nothing hulk. My brain is lazy from lack of exercise. My appetite is sated with over-indulgence. I may be a rich man's son, but otherwise I'm a piece of cheese."

"Dick, Dick, Dick, you astonish me!" cried Miss Haverstraw, her brow clouded, but her mouth curved in a soft smile.

"I hope to give you many a greater surprise than this before the six months is out," he went on decidedly. "But there's the rub. I don't know whether I'm up to this work game or not. I don't know whether I can stick at the job. I don't know whether I'm a real man, or just a giddy beast of pleasure. I'm not sure I can deny myself the joys of the spendthrift. And until I am certain I'm the things I ought to be, I'm going to stay away—that is," he grinned over the exception, "I'm not coming so often to see you."

"Oh," murmured Jane, her eyes set upon her hands clasped tightly in her lap, "that's it, is it?"

"Well," amended Dick, glancing sidewise into the inscrutable face beside him. He looked for some sign of encouragement, but he found none. He had to clear his throat before he explained diffidently: "You see, it wouldn't be fair."

"Fair? Why not?" the girl queried, turning on him sharply.

"Well, well," he flustered, his mouth working bashfully, "you see—you see—it's like this, Jane—it's like this——" then he paused.

"Yes, Dick, like what?" she prompted softly. The wave of sympathy that had swept her at the first sight of his injuries was enhanced now by the indications of the young man's painful embarrassment.

"Well," he tried it again. His unharmed arm carried his hand to his brow. His fingers pulled savagely at a lock of hair, and rubbed his forehead desperately, as if trying to corral the fleeting expression he needed to make himself clear. "Well—oh, pshaw, Jane, I'm a chump when it comes to finding the right words! Don't you know what I mean?"

But she only shook her head slowly and kept her alluring eyes set upon her twisting fingers.

Dick curled a front lock anew and drew it savagely down upon his brow. Wrinkles cut their way between his eyebrows. He hitched uneasily in his seat. The pause increased his agitation. His eyes spoke desperation. Then his mouth opened stiffly and words came tumblingly forth like swollen waters through a shattered dam.

"Jane, I can't help it," he started brokenly. "I've just got to tell you. You'll say it's unfair, unkind, ungentlemanly. Well, say what you like. But I've got to have my say——" then he halted again.

But it was not so difficult to make another start when the girl's eyes glanced at him, shyly encouraging.

"You see, Jane, I've been thinking about you for a year or more—seriously, oh, yes, seriously," he insisted when she lifted her face to him smilingly incredulous and almost tied his tongue again. "I've—I've—wanted to ask you—if maybe—well, if you didn't think—that is, if it wasn't possible, well, if it hadn't about got time—oh, pshaw!" he finally blurted angrily, "I'd rather work twenty years at hard labor than to say it!"

"I'd help you if I could, Dick," she volunteered, "but I'm really in doubt about what you're trying to say. Could you give me a hint?"

"Matrimony," exploded the young scion, idiotically.

"Dick, I've already had one proposal this evening," said Jane, gently.

"Ariston? And you accepted him?" Dick glared.

Miss Haverstraw merely shook her head soberly.

The young man heaved a sigh of relief, and a smile broke slowly across his bruised face, as he went on diffidently:

"No, I didn't intend exactly to propose, Jane. Goodness knows, I'd like to, well enough. But it's like this: I'm not going to ask you to tie yourself up to me with any promises for the next six months. I've made up my mind that I'm not an eligible young man until the end of that time. Then, if I'm worth while, Jane, look out for me, for all the horse power in this old town won't keep me from asking you. But I want you to know that in the meantime you're perfectly free. No strings of mine hold you. Do you understand me, Jane?" and he flung his hand down over her tensely clasped ones and crushed them in a fervent grip.

"Yes, Dick, I understand," the girl replied softly. She lifted her head to look him fairly in the face. He saw the diamond flash of her tear-filmed eyes and the pathetic twist to her crimson lips. He was moved to press his own to them, but he forebore. Instead, he raised her hands and pressed them reverently against his mouth.

An opening door ended the tete-a-tete abruptly. Dick awkwardly released the hands of Jane just in time to escape the shrewd glance of Father Haverstraw as he strode into the apartment.

"Only one of you young sprigs here, eh?" he grunted, as he came forward. "Hullo, you've been fighting. Who hit you?"

"An auto," Dick answered shortly. Then his eyes wirelessed to Jane the warning: "No more of that. We'll keep it to ourselves."

"Hurt much?"

Dick shook his head negatively.

"When do you begin work?" quizzed the elderly man, grinning.

"Tomorrow morning," replied the young man, briskly.

"Picked your job yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well, you're a hustler. What're you going to do?"

"Turn chauffeur."

"Why's that?"

"That's all I know—but I know that pretty well."

"H'm, how'd you like your first job here in my garage?"

"No, thank you," returned Dick, belligerently. "I'm going to be one of those taxi drivers that are as bad as bandits in holding you up for tips. The pockets of some of you rich folks are going to ache before I get through collecting. Just watch my smoke."

CHAPTER VII.

ARISTON'S NEW FRIEND.

OVER a card table Philip Ariston spent the rest of his evening—and lost. With an entree into exclusive gambling houses, he traded on his credit as a rich man's son. Cash he never needed to show. Occasionally he turned over a check for his deficits—and they were generally that. He left this night his I. O. U. for a trifle less than a thousand dollars.

The following morning he rode downtown in his father's car. At City Hall Park he asked to be set down.

"Where're you going now?" Ariston, the elder, inquired.

"To join the bums over there on the park benches," the son returned crossly. He pointed lazily with his cane to the derelicts who swarmed in the circle of seats surrounding the fountain.

"Come, come, boy," admonished the father; "nobody ever got anywhere with a sour face. Smiles are worth more in business than gold eagles. Don't forget that," and he drew shut the door of the auto, and signed the chauffeur to drive on.

Young Ariston glanced grimly after the disappearing machine, then, snapping his cane at the edge of the grass plot, he turned and walked across the park. Sneeringly he glanced at the array of loungers. They were a sad lot. Unkempt, faces scraggy under straggling beards, clothes rumpled, dirty, and ill-fitting, those who were not dozing were casting furtive eyes about. Hunger had thinned cheeks and stiffened mouths. Poverty showed in clothes, patched and green with age. Shiftlessness showed grotesquely in the unlaced shoes from above which and below the ragged edges of trousers appeared curling, grimy stockings or none at all. In all the lolling crowd, the rich man's son saw only three collars—and but one of these was clean—and only a single shabby, wrinkled, and jerky necktie.

Ariston's appearance, contrasting vividly in its dilettante perfection with that of the sprawled loungers, quickly drew attention. As he invaded the circle about the jutting fountain, heads bobbed to notice him, and elbows nudged companions from their doze. A scowl here and there, a muttered word of derision showed his appearance was regarded as an intrusion. He, with a strain of obstinacy and defiance cropping up, noted the forbidding faces. The corners of his mouth curled, and he moved to take a seat among them. He picked a spot where three men, lounging over a bench large enough for six, stubbornly refused to make room for him.

The man in the middle of the group lay half extended. His watery blue eyes, that looked hunger and hate, took in Ariston's evident desire for a seat, but he made no move to alter his position. Philip waited a moment, but still the man remained motionless. His hairy cheeks, a dirty saffron, rose and fell quickly, as if by an inward convulsion. His lips, loose and drooping, tightened sharply.

Then the rich young man arrogantly flipped his cane against the feet of the lolling figure and ordered meanly:

"Move along, will you."

A pointed steel spur could not have produced a quicker or more angry response than the stroke of the walking stick. The man jerked himself to his feet and caught Ariston by the shoulder with one massive, hairy hand.

"Who yer hittin'?" the shaggy lips snorted. "Damme, don't yer come roun' here pullin' off any rough stuff wi' yer swellin' airs."

The admonition was accompanied with a shake that rocked the young man to his toes.

"Let go, will you," he snapped back hotly. "Keep your dirty paws off me," and to accent his command he lifted his cane and brought it down smartly across the legs of the derelict.

The man swore foully. Then he threw both arms about Ariston's waist and tossed him violently to the seat. Philip tried to raise his cane, but it was swept aside by his assailant, who jammed his giant palm against Ariston's face and forced his head backward until his neck snapped.

The clash quickly drew a crowd. The two men between whom Ariston had been thrust, one with an oath and the other with a hoarse guffaw, lopped violently against him. The spectators, on tiptoe to see the center of the attack, beheld a faultlessly attired young man with a smudge upon his face, his hat tilted back to a tipsy angle, his arms vainly striving to work themselves free, and a look akin to murder in his eyes.

"Sic, 'em, sic' 'em!" the crowd egged on the conflict.

"Let me go, you whelps!" snapped Ariston.

Again his massive assailant thrust one huge hand into the young man's face. The other hand he swung threateningly, aiming it for the jaw. It looked as if Philip was in for a nasty beating. It stood a hundred to one—until a lithe figure, no better clothed, no cleaner faced than the rest, plowed his way through the crowd and tore the hostile grip from Ariston. Then he dragged the young man to his feet.

"Quit it, youse guys!" bawled the newcomer, waving the crowd away. "D'yo' want us all run outen this lodgin' house? Ain't ennybody but us hoboes got enny rights here? Vamoose! Here comes a 'bull'."

The crowd melted with many a furtive look, as a policeman slowly approached. Ariston, shaking himself as if to throw off the grime of dirty hands, was about to open his mouth to complain, when his rescuer cut in:

"Keep yer trap shut, boss. Yer one ag'in' a hundred."

Philip, raging inwardly, straightened his hat, drew out a virgin handkerchief to wipe his face, and started slowly toward Park Row. The policeman, avoiding trouble, did not even ask an explanation of the disturbance.

At the park edge Ariston felt a touch upon his back. Turning, he met the awkward gaze of the young man who had broken the attack upon him.

"I say, boss," the fellow stammered, "you couldn't stake me to a cup o' coffee an' a sandwich, could you? A dime 'ud do it. I ain't had a bite sence yistidy noon."

"Sure," returned Ariston, huffily, as he halted. But his face gloomed deeper when he dived his hand into a trousers pocket. It was bare of all coin. It came to him then that he was still as he had been at the making of the parental wager in the Saints's Club on the preceding afternoon—without a cent.

"Sorry, kid," he smiled sourly, "but I haven't a nickel in loose change."

The young man opened his rough lips cynically.

"Huh, I took yo' fer a real one," he grunted, "but yo' ain't nuthin' but a cheap skate, after all. Sorry I didn't let 'em whale away at you, you four flush."

Ariston's sallow cheeks flamed red at the retort. Hot words were at his tongue's tip. But he withheld them. Instead he thrust his cane, a handsome,

Missing Heirs.

Attorneys in foreign countries are constantly advertising for persons to come forward and prove their claims to estates there that remain unsettled. As a great many of the descendants of the persons leaving these estates now reside in this country, they never see the advertisement and therefore know nothing of the good fortune that has befallen them. We have arranged with these attorneys to publish their announcements, and each month there appears in our publication a long list of the persons wanted, with the name and address of the attorney seeking them. Your name may be among them. Send a 2-cent stamp and secure a copy of our magazine, or, what is better still, send 25 cents in stamps and receive it for one whole year. Address The Welcome Guest, 225 West Thirty-ninth Street, New York City.

gold-mounted stick, into his rescuer's grasp.

"Take that," he said. "You can raise a dollar or two on it. It's worth twenty."

"T'anks, boss," the man apologized, "I'll take me crack back. Y' ain't so worse after all."

"I'll send for it—if you've got any safe place to leave it," suggested Ariston.

"I dunno; livin' ain't very regular with me, jes' now. But I gets my mail at Mills No. One."

"What's your name?"

"Simon Jenks, late o' Company E, Thirty-ninth U. S. Infantry."

"And now hoboing?"

The young man nodded his head dejectedly.

"Y' see, boss," he explained, "I jes' got mustered out after puttin' in three years in the Philippines. Rotten livin' over there. An' w'en I got my discharge money, I was so hungry fer real American livin' I blew my wad."

"Thirsty as well as hungry," sneered Ariston.

"If you like," agreed the man.

"Well, here's my card," said Philip, pulling out a slip of pasteboard. He jotted his address in a corner. "Let me know before you starve to death."

The hand that took the spotless card was seamed with grime, but the eyes that read the name and address upon it were clear and keen.

"Fift' avenue, eh?" the man muttered. "So y' are a blue stockin', eh? Beg pardon, mister. No 'fense with that 'cheap skate' stuff, I hope?"

"Don't pawn that cane too cheaply now," admonished Ariston, "and save the ticket."

"Boss, trust me at that," grinned the hobo. Then, as an afterthought, he added: "Whenever you need a strong arm man again, jes' call me in."

The rich man's son merely curled a corner of his mouth as he started to saunter on down Park Row toward Broadway. But he stowed away the name of Simon Jenks, late of Company E, Thirty-ninth U. S. Infantry, in the back of his head.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIRED.

TURNING from Broadway into Wall street, Philip Ariston, inwardly still ruffled by his encounter in City Hall Park, but outwardly cool and flippant, mounted in the elevator of the first building to the east, and by dint of icy-eyed persistence managed to pass a couple of stubborn clerks and penetrate the room upon whose frosted glass door appeared in modest gilt letters:

Benjamin Hoskins
Private.

Hoskins, a short, stout gentleman with pink cheeks that hung flabbily down over his collar top and a white shining forehead unbroken by hair until it encountered a thin black ridge far back on the skull, stood at a stock market ticker in the corner, the running tape held loosely between his fingers.

He did not look up until Ariston had closed the door and dropped into a chair at the side of his desk. Then his abbreviated legs hustled across the room and lowered him to his easy, swinging chair. He briskly jotted down an enigma of figures, puckered his brow a bit, looked up sharply at his caller, and jabbing his pencil point into his desk pad by way of keeping time with his words said briskly:

"Well, sir, your father's name having got you in here, what is it you want?"

"A job," replied Philip, with a dry smile.

"You? Why don't you apply to your dad then? He has plenty."

"Too slow," returned the visitor, coolly. "I want to get rich quick."

"Nothing doing," snapped Hoskins, and he went back to his figuring as if dismissing his caller.

"But I'm in earnest," insisted Ariston. "I want to learn your knack of milking the stock market. You do it so easily."

The broker looked up sternly.

"Do it easy, eh?" he scoffed. "I'll bet I sweat a pint of blood over it every twenty-four hours."

"Well, the results are big enough to warrant it, aren't they?"

"Are you willing to pay that price?"

"I'm willing to pay any price to make a pile quick."

"That's it, is it? A pile quick!" the broker scorned. "Gad! Folks seem to think I make mine easy."

"Don't you? The papers have always got you pulling off some trick that makes you a million or so."

Hoskins merely grunted, while his eyes roved back to the ticker in the corner.

"For five years I've read of you as the most successful plunger in the country," went on Ariston.

"Yes? but I'm not telling of the times I fall down."

"Let me stand by and watch you a while, anyway," Philip urged.

"Young man," Hoskins leaned forward and tapped Ariston on the hand, "you're a fool if you go into this business. It doesn't get you anywhere. Money that comes as easy as this does when things go right for you never gets you anything worth while. It's come easy, go easy. It's only the dough that's honestly earned that counts."

"Well, all I want is the chance to make the dough. I'll see that the cake is properly eaten."

"Humph! you talk like a fool."

"Show me some wisdom then."

"You really want to learn this stock gambling game?" Hoskins looked at his caller with scornful eye.

"Yes, and I'm applying to the best instructor in the Street."

"How much money have you got to lose?"

"Not a cent. I want to get the hang of things from the ground up. I want to start with the A B C's."

Hoskins snorted. Then he rose, went to the ticker, and studied the tumbling tape. In a minute he was back at his desk.

"You're a likely looking chap," he went on, as he proceeded to dab his pencil into his desk pad. "You come of mighty good blood. Your old man is as shrewd a business man as this country knows. But I've seen hundreds of young chaps as keen as you go to pieces down here. And I've seen scores of seasoned business heads as wise as your dad's go broke on this Wall street wheel. It's no easier to play and win here than it is at Monte Carlo, and only one in ten thousand carries away any winnings from there." He paused a minute to let his words sink in. "Do you still want to try?"

"I still want to try," responded Ariston, firmly.

"Then because I want to cure as quickly as I can the son of an old man I like almighty well, I'll lead you over the jumps. But, first of all, you've got to promise to follow my instructions implicitly. Do you agree?"

"But will you put me in the way of making money, a good bunch of money—in jig time?"

"I'll promise nothing. You must take your own chances."

"Well, I'll take the chances."

"Hang up your coat and hat outside, then, and consider yourself hired," said the broker, as he tossed his pencil aside and rose to his feet. "I'll give you fifty dollars a week for what you'll do, but remember, until you've learned your lesson, you're to keep your fingers out of the market. Do you agree to that?"

"I'll agree to anything to get the benefit of your steer," agreed Ariston.

"And one thing more, more important than all the rest, you've got to keep your mouth shut. Will you?"

"Sure, that's the best thing I do."

"Not even your old man is to know?"

"Not even my old man."

Ariston went out of the room, and in a moment was back hatless and coatless.

"I'm turning a trick now," explained Hoskins from his post beside the ticker. "I think it's going to be a trump, too. It's in St. Louis Eastern."

He looked up to see that Philip was listening attentively. Then he went on:

"The road's been a gold mine for ten years and has paid seven per cent. annual dividends. But for the past year business has fallen off. Dividends

"You're a cheap skate!"

have been paid when the money ought to have gone into maintenance. The roadbed has been allowed to depreciate. Bridges are in poor repair. Rolling stock is in bad shape."

He stopped for breath and tickled the tip of an ear before he continued:

"The directors have been paying more attention to the movement of the stock market than to the movement of trains. The stock is selling around 130. It isn't worth it. Either the dividend will have to be cut, or the road will have to sell a bunch of equipment bonds. Then the stockholders will open their eyes and begin to let go of their stock. That'll be genuine liquidation. The price of the stock ought to tumble ten to twenty points. Is that clear to you?"

"So far, yes," nodded Ariston.

"Well, I've already begun to sell St. Louis Eastern short. Quietly, you know, so that nobody will suspect. I'm already short something like 10,000 shares. I hope to put out 25,000 before I'm ready to blow. Then we'll bust that bubble wide open."

"But how?"

"Simp!" snapped Hoskins. "Listen. When I'm ready, we'll have the papers full of stuff about the bad physical condition of the St. Louis Eastern. There'll be rumors about a cut in the dividend. There'll be reports about probable bond issue. Maybe an accident or two will help out the talk about poor roadbed. I'll get a few travelers over the road to complain about the rotten service. Maybe I'll find some ten-share stockholder to bring an attack on the directors for paying dividends when they're not earned. If that don't start the stock down, then I don't know anything about nervous investors. And once it starts to slide, it ought not to stop short of par."

"And that'll mean?"

"I'll be able to cover my shorts from 110 down. I ought to make an average of twenty points profit. On 25,000 shares that figures a round half million. But if I get clear with half of that I'll be satisfied. It'll cost something to run this campaign."

"Gad! that looks mighty good to me," laughed Ariston, with as much interest as he ever showed.

"Now, listen, young man," warned Hoskins, "you keep your mouth shut and keep your fingers out of this. Mind, you're only a learner. And I'm not so sure I won't get my own fingers burned in this trick. There's nothing so uncertain in the world as a deal in the stock market. Do you hear? Keep out."

But that afternoon before Ariston started uptown in a friends' auto, he visited the office of a broker his father occasionally employed. Trading on his parent's credit, the son left an order for the quiet sale of a thousand shares of St. Louis Eastern stock for his own account.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK GETS A JOB.

When Dick Dansbey announced that in his plunge into wage-earning he intended to do the only thing he knew much about—drive an automobile—he rang the bell with a bull's-eye shot. He certainly knew how to get speed out of a car. Four stiff fines for too fast driving testified to that.

Nor was he without a thorough knowledge of the mechanical end of an auto. He could repair a tire, adjust his control, grind the valves of his engine, or do any of the half-hundred tinker tasks about a car, with the deftness of a trained machinist. His friends, hearing of his hair-raising exploits in annihilating time, agreed that a splendid head for mechanics had been spoiled to make an addle-pate for a rich man's son. Yet this same maligned pate knew enough to choose wisely when confronted with the extremity of industry.

Dick, however, was cheated out of the first day in his half year's race to riches. When he awoke on the morning following his encounter with Philip Ariston's automobile, he was too sore in body to rise. His injured left arm lay stiff. His bruised knees were tender to the touch. A splotch of white court-plaster across one cheek gave him a sinister look.

From his pillow he glanced across the room to a mirror. He groaned as he beheld the reflection of his face.

"I'd like to punch his blamed head!" he muttered. "I'd have done it, too, if Jane hadn't been there. He's a dirty skunk."

All day he moped about his father's home. But his mind was busy. He even began to foot up prospective earnings. By night he had figured himself into possession of a comfortable sum. But he doubted whether it would be enough to warrant him in dropping it at the feet of Jane Haverstraw together with the proffer of his name.

At eight the next morning Dick limped into the office of a taxicab concern just west of Broadway. Two policemen stood at the door and three more inside. Idle taxis crowded the place.

Dick's faultless attire hardly fitted an applicant for a job. Hence the office man, purple-cheeked and rotund nosed, scanned him curiously.

"Need any more drivers?"

"Can't get enough," returned the man. "D'you want a job?"

"What's the pay?" Dick laughed inwardly at the procedure. He had never thought to come to a dicker like this.

"Twenty-five a week regularly, but if you want to go to work right away, I'll make it thirty."

Twenty-five dollars a week! He was used to spend that much an hour. The contrast startled him a bit.

"How much experience have you had?" queried the man in the office.

"More'n enough," rejoined the applicant. "I've driven a car for five years."

"What's the name?"

"Richard Dansbey."

The man glanced up inquisitively, as if the name recalled something unusual, but the curiosity passed quickly.

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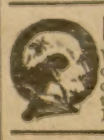

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Try Shorthand On Me!

These are not very dignified words for the General Manager of a high-grade educational institution to use, but they express just what I want to say. "Try Shorthand on me."

I knew a young fellow who would like to have improved his conditions in the world and had thought shorthand a possible vocation, but this young man was under the impression that shorthand was a difficult thing to learn and he doubted his ability to master it.

He did not feel like paying out any of his hard-earned money to experiment, and so kept along in the rut until I learned of his case. Just to prove to him that he could learn shorthand, I sent him a couple of lessons at my expense. I charged nothing for them, and did not ask him to obligate himself in any way.

Within fifteen minutes from the time he received the lessons, he understood the simplicity of shorthand, the principles of shorthand, and could actually write some words in shorthand and could read them readily.

His doubts immediately disappeared and he eventually became an expert writer, filling a far better position than he had ever held before.

So I thought that there must be hundreds of other young fellows who were in the same condition—young men who had it in them to make a big success in the world if they were just started, and this is the reason for the remarkable offer that I am now making to readers of this magazine.

If you will write your name and address plainly on the attached coupon and mail it to me, I will send you absolutely without charge—even the postage paid—two lessons in shorthand, enough to enable you to actually write in shorthand and to give you an understanding of the principles.

Please understand that this is not a scheme to send you lessons on trial. There is absolutely no charge for these lessons, they are given to you.

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"And the address?" he asked, proceeding to enter the particulars in a book at his side.

"No. 901 Fifth avenue," replied Dick, shortly.

"What's that? Fifth avenue?"

Dansbey nodded soberly.

"Not a son of old Hiram Dansbey, the big dry goods man?"

"The same," said Dick shortly.

"But this ain't no job for you, young man," expostulated the man.

"I didn't come to argue that with you," announced the applicant, as he turned as if to leave. "I came to see if you wanted to hire a good driver."

"Hold on, hold on!" cried the employer. "I'll take you on. Glad to do it—just now. Suppose you're lookin' for a little excitement. Well, you'll get it all right."

"When do I begin?"

"Right away. Them clothes you're wearing is too good for the job, though. Haven't you got some others?"

"Don't worry. Lend me a duster till I can buy one," suggested Dick.

"Sure. But how about your license?"

"Nothing doing."

"Then I'll slip you one made out in another name, see? I'll also slip you this," continued the man, and opening a drawer in his desk, he picked out a revolver from a collection of weapons and dropped it into Dansbey's pocket.

"What's that for?" demanded the latter, in surprise. "To hold up my patrons with?"

"No," returned the other grimly. "You may make so much you may have to hold off some hold-up men. Don't be afraid to use it, either."

In half an hour, his head buzzing with instructions about rules of the road, fares, tips, and stands, Dick cranked his engine into action, drew on a pair of gauntlets, and stepped into his seat. Before he could move a wheel, a policeman took a place beside him. Two more fell in behind his taxi.

"Afraid I'm going to run away with it?" Dick quizzed sharply.

"Nope, 'fraid somebody else will," growled the bluecoat.

"What's all this mummery business about, anyway?" blurted Dansbey, as the car rolled slowly out of the garage.

"You'll find out in about thirty seconds," retorted the copper. Then he went on sourly: "'Tain't exactly a square deal with you, kiddo. The guy back there should have put you wise. Their drivers struck on them this morning, so they're taking on anybody that comes along. And the strikers are raisin' Cain with 'em."

For one fleeting moment Dick considered halting his taxi and turning back. He had read of previous strikes in which new drivers hired to take the places of the men who had walked out had to undergo violence and injury. Irrespective of the merits of the controversy, he did not want to figure as taking the place of another man.

"Not that way, not that way!" came a warning shout from the garage. "Go to Broadway." His grip stiffening on the wheel, he was too intent on his task to hear. Instead he turned on a bit more speed.

Balk at his first job? No, he wouldn't do it. He would see it through. He decided he was willing to endure a baptism of trouble in order to prove himself worth while as a hired man.

Nor did he have long to wait for the baptism. Running west to Eighth avenue, he passed a line of policemen apparently massed for an outbreak. At the corner he saw a reason. Against the curb lopped a taxi, the mate of his own. Every window bore great, jagged holes. The red hood was dented in and the engine exposed. Two tires were slashed and flattened. A lamp was twisted off. The leather sides were torn and broken in a dozen places. The machine was completely hors du combat.

"That's the second one this mornin'," announced the bluecoat, sourly.

Dick was glancing back at the wreck, as he turned into the avenue, when he felt something jar at his feet. A brick had fallen, apparently out of the sky. Before he had recovered from his surprise, a window glass crashed threateningly behind him.

"Speed 'er up, speed 'er up!" ordered the policeman at his side. "This kind o' hail's goin' to hurt."

Dick spun forward faster, but the missiles did not stop. As he reached the next corner, from both sides of the cross street poured a crowd of angry men. Their hands were filled with paving stones, pieces of brick, short sticks of wood. In an instant the air was filled with the weapons. They fell about Dick as thick as snowflakes. A brick landed on his shoulder. A club swished past his nose. A stone dropped upon his knee.

The policeman let out a grunt as he ducked a stone only to catch a heavy stick full upon the ear. He raised his club threateningly, but he clung to his seat. It seemed safer than trusting himself on his feet against the mob, which, silent at first, now burst into a menacing roar as it saw that some of its fusillade had struck the target.

Two heavy trucks ahead halted Dick's speed. The delay gave the crowd time to surround the taxi. The glass windows were hammered in, a door was dragged open and faisly ripped from its hinges. Then came a pop as of a pistol shot quickly followed by another, and Dansbey felt the rear wheel of his car settle. His two back tires had been punctured. The taxi came slowly to a stop.

A score of threat-breathing faces closed in on Dick. A swarm of angry hands clutched at him. A fist landed lightly upon an ear.

He grinned. That was a characteristic of Dick. Whenever he faced a crisis he always grinned. And as he grinned, he acted. Before the "copper" at his side had decided to move, Dansbey pulled off his gauntlets, thrust a hand into an inner pocket, and drew forth the revolver that had been handed to him in the garage. He reached far out toward the circle of menacing assailants and swung the weapon close to their faces.

"Vamoose, now, quick!" he yelled warningly, "or I'll let some of your blood loose!"

The mob fell back a pace. Behind the grin on the chauffeur's face there was a forbidding blaze in his eyes.

"Kill the scab! Kill the scab!" came the inciting cry from the rear of the crowd.

"Kill him, eh?" Dick howled, and he leaped stiffly to the pavement, still brandishing his revolver. "Come on, then, and try it!"

He saw amid the array of threatening arms around him the flash of a glinting blade of steel—a long, evil knife. He remembered afterward that he had imagined in the crisis how a thrust from such a weapon would feel between his ribs. Then the danger spurred him. He elevated his weapon above his head and fired once. He lowered it to the pavement and fired again.

"It's straight into you the next time," he shouted, as he leveled the revolver squarely at the faces of the crowd, "and I'm going to hit as many of you as I can."

Cursing, muttering, cowed, the mob looked into the determined eye of the rich man's son, and then retreated slowly. Sweeping his front with eyes flaming with the thrill of battle, Dick dominated the situation. He stood steady as a rock until a bluecoat closed in beside him. And as the clang of a patrol wagon with a load of reserves sounded near, the mob scurried to cover in adjacent streets and buildings.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this remarkable story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Three Ideas of Nothing.

In an Irish school not long ago, a school teacher asked a class to define "Nothing." He wrote the question on the blackboard, and did so quickly and rather carelessly. A little red-headed fellow's hand shot up.

"Well, Thady, what is nothing?" said the teacher. "You may tell us."

"It's the dot on the i ye've just forgotten to make, sor!" was the triumphant reply.

An equally good definition was that of the lad who declared that nothing was a "footless stocking without a leg." He, too, was Irish. Less imaginative, but no less convincing, was the mercenary definition given by a canny "chiel" in Scotland.

"It's when a man asks ye to hold his horse," he explained, ruefully, "and then just says 'Thank ye.'"

* * *

A Remarkable Gift.

"A sense of humor is a fine possession. With some men, however, it goes to extremes—to ghastly extremes."

The scene was the Economic Club's dinner at the Hotel Astor in New York. The speaker, Mayor Hunt of Cincinnati, continued:

"I used to know in Horace Annesley a man with this excessive sense of humor. Horace said to me one morning, with a ghoulish laugh:

"'I've got the greatest joke to tell you!'

"'Well, what is it?' said I.

"'You know,' said Horace, 'that I was examined and passed for life insurance last week? Well—ha, ha, ha!—I've been to consult a specialist this morning, and he tells me I've got an incurable disease. He gives me just one year. Ha, ha, ha!'"

* * *

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The Wrecked Planet

Or, Ajax Binney's Omniopus

By William Wallace Cook

"What's the use?"

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Begun in No. 38, September 20. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER VIII.

JERRY sat down on the bowlder which I had recently heaved out of the cabin. "What do you make of all these goings-on, 'Dolphus?" he asked wearily.

"I have about decided, Jerry," I answered, "that you and I are not sufficiently well informed to operate this 'plant' successfully."

"I can make that much out of it myself, even with this head of mine going around like a whirligig. What I can't understand is that ring of omniopus that circles the mountain just below the plant. It wasn't there when the Greasers came and went; if it had been, they'd never have got through. They couldn't have put it there, neither. Blamed queer how this energy acts."

"Did Uncle Ajax tell you anything about that Mexican who made the attack on him yesterday?"

"No more'r he told you, 'Dolphus, and that was mighty little. If he'd taken me more into his confidence like, we might have been able to work the gun and yank him out of trouble. But he didn't seem to think I had sense enough for anything but to get meals and take care of the horses."

"He probably had some scheme or other at the back of his head, Jerry."

"Sure he did, and his scheme wasn't nothing more 'r less than to have you chink in here so'st you could carry out his ideas in case anything went crossways with him. He was turrible fond of you, 'Dolphus. Many's the time he's said to me, 'Jerry,' he says, 'Ajax and 'Dolphus is the only two Binneys that amounts to a whoop,' he says. Then you went and talked in your sleep, and I never see a man so plumb distracted as your uncle was—distracted, and disapp'inted, and crazy mad. I reckoned, when he shot for that power-house, that he was going to wreck the Capitol at Washington just to ease his feelings."

"I don't know what I could have said that should make him feel like that," I commented, with genuine regret.

"Nor me. But he's gone, now, Ajax is. Them Greasers have put him out of business, and no two ways about it. We—I——" Jerry choked up and drew the back of his hand across his eyes.

"You're mistaken, Jerry," said I, laying a hand on the faithful fellow's shoulder. "My uncle is alive; he has not been foully dealt with, as yet."

"How do you know that, 'Dolphus?" demanded Jerry, throwing back his head and giving me a look half hopeful and half incredulous.

"Read this," and I handed him the note that had arrived in camp by rock delivery.

He went through the communication carefully, trailing down each word with a rough and stubby forefinger. When he had finished, he gave me a hostile look; then, as though to make sure he had reason for hostility, he read the note a second time.

"Huh!" he grunted. "I guess I know now what you talked of in your sleep. You're a traitor. The Ten that own the country are enemies of your uncle's, and from what I'm able to make out they sent you here. I don't know, but it strikes me you ought to feel pretty small and meachin'."

"I'm not a traitor to Uncle Ajax," I declared stoutly. "The Ten are afraid of him. He has been in retirement for several years, and The Ten, who understand his abilities more than any one else in this country, have been very uneasy. They were sure he was perfecting some invention aimed at their supremacy. A swarm of detectives traveled in all directions to locate him. One of them discovered that he was not over a hundred miles from the city of Phoenix. The Ten then commissioned me to go to Uncle Ajax and offer him a life pension of fifty thousand dollars a year if he'd stop inventing things. I accepted the work, but it was nothing to me whether Uncle Ajax accepted or rejected the proposal. I'd have proved loyal to him and have given him my help, either way. If I talked about The Ten in my sleep, then my uncle overheard too much and not enough. Had I been allowed to explain fully, my uncle's confidence in me would have been increased rather than shattered. That's the whole truth, Jerry."

Jerry's face brightened. "I believe you, 'Dolphus!" he exclaimed heartily. "It ain't possible you could turn on your own kin. But what're we to do? Who's this Pue person, and what right has he got butting in?"

"I know no more about him than you do, or than he tells us of himself in that note. Probably he's a member of some humane society for the prevention of cruelty to the inhabitants of the globe. A fanatic, no doubt, who has made himself a committee of one to suppress Uncle Ajax. It's easily to be seen, too, that he knows a lot more about us, and Uncle Ajax, and the 'plant' here, than we know about him."

"He's an assassin," scowled Jerry, "and if he's so close by, why under the canopy couldn't we locate him with the Arm?"

"Very likely he knows how to hide himself and his gang so that the Arm is powerless to reveal his rendezvous. He's a clever man, this Anthony Pue. We've got to admit that, Jerry. And we must realize, also, that he has the courage of his fanaticism. He's as desperate as he is clever, and his threat is no idle one."

"I guess that's right. Prob'ly he means just what he says. Ajax'll die if we don't p'int the gun at the clouds and shoot the energy into the stars. But I hate to do it. Wasting all this omniopus, that Ajax has been years storing away under the overhang, will be his death when he finds it out. I wonder if we got the right, 'Dolphus?"

"We've got the right, I take it, to save the life of Uncle Ajax."

"I dunno 'bout that. I think he druther we wouldn't. I'll bet he druther die than have us throw away all that energy. And another thing: When the German ships commence bombardin' our Atlantic coast, and the Jap ships get busy on the Pacific slope, what's to save the country if omniopus has all leaked out into the firmament? Your uncle dotes on martyrs. Nathan Hale, and Winkelried, and all them dead and gone heroes is favorites of his. I think he'd be happy to be a martyr himself, 'Dolphus."

"He'd be a martyr to no purpose, Jerry," I objected. "Uncle Ajax is the only man who can operate this 'plant' safely and successfully. You and I can't do it. We'd very likely hurt our own side more than we damaged the enemy."

Jerry gave vent to a hollow groan. "I wisht this Pue had waited a couple of days before stealing Ajax away," he murmured sorrowfully. "Then you might have got your hand in, 'Dolphus, same as your uncle was planning to have you do. I reckon we might p'int the gun straight up and not turn on the energy at all. It ain't anything you can see, this energy. Pue wouldn't know but what we was carrying out his orders."

"As we drew on the omniopus," I suggested, "wouldn't it go down in the reservoir?"

"Sure."

"Pue may have means of examining the reservoir. In that way he would discover the trick."

"I don't think he knows so much as he lets on, 'Dolphus. I'll bet something handsome he's bluffing."

"Possibly; but we can't afford to take chances, with the life of Uncle Ajax at stake."

"Oh, hang it!" cried Jerry, in great discontent, "I don't know the first thing to do. If we——"

Just then the mountain shook perceptibly under our feet. There was a fearful detonation accompanying the

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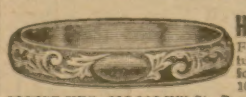

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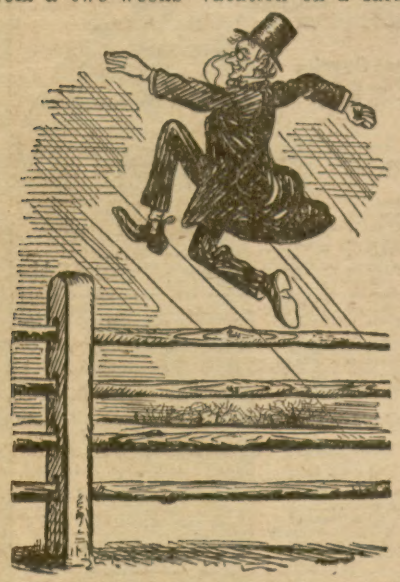

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phenomenon, and Jerry and I leaped erect and caught hold of each other in an agony of apprehension. Our awed eyes sought the crest of the mountain, where the solar engine had been working all day grinding out omniopus. A geyser of sand, rocks, and machinery had shot into the air from the basin, giving the mountain the appearance of an active volcano.

Jerry and I clung to each other in mute bewilderment until the debris had settled and the air cleared; then we rushed up the path to the basin, only to find that not a trace of that part of the equipment had been left. The depression had been swept clean of everything in the form of machinery.

"Pue!" I gasped, thinking of no one at the moment but the humanitarian and his plots. "He has blown up the solar engine, Jerry!"

"Not Pue," answered Jerry; "he couldn't have got here to work off any such devilment. I'm the one that's to blame!"

"You?"

"Yes, me. The water got low in the b'iler. I ought to've set the injector to work this morning, but with Ajax kidnaped and so much going on, I plumb forgot it. The b'iler let go, and the explosion has cleaned up on everything in the basin. That solar engine, 'Dolphus, has manufactured the last erg of omniopus."

"Then there's no use trying to stand out against Anthony Pue."

"I don't guess there is," and Jerry shook his head sadly. "We might as well go down to the power-house and begin throwing energy at the heavens. All Ajax done here ain't a-going to amount to shucks. Nothing remains for us but to pull out the plug and let his life-work fritter away. Come on, 'Dolphus."

Jerry descended the slope slowly with bowed head. We both of us, I'm sure, felt as though we were about to attend the funeral of Uncle Ajax.

CHAPTER IX.

WE MADE a discovery when we reached the power-house. Had we thought to investigate that place before, we should have discovered the cause of that impassable barrier that held us to the top of the mountain. The muzzle of the gun was depressed. In some manner the pointer of the scale had worked around so that the projector-guide had caused the mountain to be girdled with omniopus.

It was difficult to understand just how this had happened. Our ignorance, in some way, had been responsible. We had forgotten to shut off the power, after using it in vain search for Uncle Ajax. When the energy was "on" the dynamo was always running. Not hearing the hum of the electrical machine, we naturally supposed that the power was "off." As a matter of fact it was leaving the mouth of the gun, racing around the mountain and then returning to the gun again. There was no pull on the reservoir, for the energy needed for the work was limited.

Jerry threw over the lever that recalled the omniopus to the vacuum tank; he next manipulated other levers that caused the top of the house, immediately over the gunroom, to fold back. The muzzle of the old weapon was then lifted until the whole piece stood almost perpendicularly on the breech.

So far Jerry had done all the work. He now slumped down on the platform, buried his face in his hands and began to sob. The grief of a strong man is always a terrible thing to witness, and I felt a good deal like blubbering myself.

"S-s-switch it on, 'Dolphus," Jerry gurgled from behind his hands. "We're p-p-pulling your uncle's life up by the r-r-roots, and I fell like a m-m-murderer. I've done my p-part and can't do another tap."

White as death, I went down on my shaking knees and punched the proper button. The wire-enforced rubber tube heaved convulsively under the sudden strain of the released power, the dynamo took up its crooning song, and the omniopus, hoarded through long and weary years, poured itself out into the blue vault above.

"S-slide the p-pointer off the upper end of the scale," suggested the tearful Jerry; "if the Arm goes twelve thousand miles and stops the reservoir won't drain."

I climbed up on a stool and pushed the marker entirely off the guides. When I got down, I patted the woe-begone Jerry on the shoulder and bade him cheer up.

"It's awful," he said, with a shudder. "I never thought I'd be playing it this low-down on Ajax."

"We're not working against my uncle, really," I argued. "We're doing the only thing in our power to save his life."

"I wisht I knew what he'd think about it," groaned Jerry. "I don't want to be around when he looks into that reservoir and finds it empty."

I took a look into the camera obscura, and immediately it was as though I was poised in distant space, with nothing on any side of me save the great void. My nerves rebelled at the spectacle and I staggered back.

"Let's go up to the overhang, Jerry," I remarked, "and see if the energy is going down. I think such must be the case."

What Jerry needed—what we both needed, in fact—was something at which we could busy ourselves and take our minds off this monstrous thing we were doing.

A gurgling assailed our ears above the hum of the dynamo, as we passed the corner of the power-house. Water was issuing from a pipe, at the end of the structure farthest from the gunroom, and pouring over the cliff.

"What does that mean?" I demanded, greatly perturbed.

"That must be the mineral water that held the energy in solution," replied Jerry. "The tank in the dynamo-room is overflowing. Say, I'll bet the pool under the overhang is going down a foot a minute."

Jerry's guess proved to be almost the literal truth. Standing on the rim of the pit with a lighted torch, we saw the omniopus recede steadily toward the bottom of the reservoir.

"How deep is the storage tank, Jerry?" I inquired.

"Twenty feet out there in the middle," he answered.

"Then," I speculated, "in an hour it will be drained."

"In an hour," echoed Jerrry, staring down into the pit like a man entranced. "In an hour, 'Dolphus, you and me are going to smash the labors of years. Wow, I can't stand this!" and he flung aside the torch and rushed out into the open.

We made our way moodily to the cabin. While I pulled at my pipe, resigning myself to the inevitable with as good a grace as I could muster, Jerry tramped up and down the room. It was nearly an hour afterwards when he looked up suddenly at me, his face haggard and drawn, and started for the door.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To look after them horses, 'Dolphus." There was a guilty air about him as he said it, but I was reassured when I saw him pass the cabin window headed for the corral. He was gone for possibly twenty minutes, and seemed a trifle more contented when he got back. "All gone from the reservoir but about a barrel," he reported. "I guess this here Anthony Pue ought to be satisfied now."

"I guess he had," I agreed.

It was falling dark, by then, and I suggested supper. We lighted a lamp and prepared the meal in silence. Neither of us was in a mood for talk. Supper over, we smoked for a couple of hours and speculated as to the time we might expect Uncle Ajax back. Such speculations were idle, for Uncle Ajax was at the mercy of Anthony Pue, and we were totally in the dark as to Anthony Pue's intentions. Giving over the useless discussion we made ready for bed. Jerry had no more than removed his boots, when swift feet crunched the gravel outside.

"Ajax!" cried Jerry, and jumped for the door and flung it wide.

He staggered back. A stranger faced him, a little, dried-up man with spectacles, a tuft of chin-whiskers, and a silk hat of about the vintage of '90. He had lifted his hand to rap just as Jerry pulled the door away from him. With some dignity he now stepped into the cabin.

"Mr. Binney," said he, tentatively, his eyes passing from Jerry to me, "Mr. Adolphus J. Binney?"

"I am that gentleman," I spoke up, advancing.

Our caller smiled pleasantly. "My name is Anthony Pue," said he, "and I dropped up——"

A bellow of rage burst from Jerry Mander. He flung himself savagely at Anthony Pue, and that startled gentleman leaped backward just in time to escape rough treatment. Before Jerry could make a second attack I had stepped between the two.

"That will do, Jerry," said I, sternly.

"I want his scalp, that's what I want!" roared Jerry. "After what he's done to your uncle, and what he's made us do to your uncle's 'plant,' he's got the nerve to blow in here and look us in the face."

"Don't get excited," counseled Pue. "It doesn't take much nerve to look either of you gentlemen in the face—just now. If anything goes wrong with me, you understand, something will also go wrong with Ajax Binney."

Active hostility immediately ceased, on Jerry's part. He withdrew and sat down on one of the bunks, saying fierce things under his breath.

"Of course, Mr. Pue," said I, frigidly, "you ought to know that, after all you have done, you can't be very welcome here."

"What I have done, sir," he returned, with another access of dignity, "I have done for humanity."

"Undoubtedly that is your conception; but mine is somewhat different."

"You are an agent of The Ten——"

"Not agent; merely a messenger."

"And being in sympathy with The Ten, you——"

"I am not in sympathy with them."

"No?" He seemed surprised. "Then, may I ask, why are you a messenger for those robbers of the people?"

"Because Ajax Binney is my uncle. I wanted to find him. I believed it would be safer for my uncle if I acted for The Ten than if I refused and let them hire some would-be assassin—like yourself."

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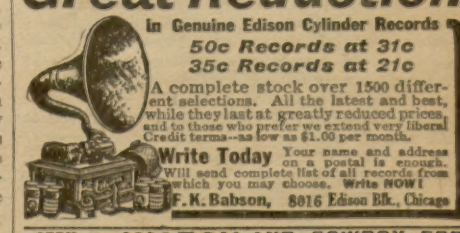
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He started as though stung. His face purpled with rage, and he caught at the tuft of chin-whiskers with one clawlike hand.

"Assassin! You dare couple that infamous term with the name of Anthony Pue, whose one thought, first and last, is always for the people?" Suddenly he checked his anger, swallowed hard, and even contrived to smile again. "But you do not understand, my dear sir; you are not informed, and you fail to grasp the situation. I am president of the Society for the Protection of the People, with headquarters in Boston and throughout the world. Our motto is, Peace and Protection at any Price. When our private investigators located your uncle, and reported what his massive genius was perpetrating in this wilderness, I was voted an emergency fund and sent here in person to deal with him. Ajax Binney's discovery—the storing of vast quantities of energy and its projection anywhere and everywhere over the surface of the earth—constitutes power which, in the very nature of things, is a calamity. Hence the order for Binney's suppression."

"You are also working in the interests of The Ten?" I queried.

Again I had touched him in a sensitive spot. He choked down his rage, however, and continued to smile.

"The Ten are foes of the people, sir," he made answer, "and we shall suppress them as effectually as we have dealt with Ajax Binney. The Ten are afraid of us, so much afraid that they have crossed the ocean and are holding their yearly meeting in Paris."

"If you had let my uncle alone," I went on, "he would have put The Ten out of business. That was one of his objects in developing this discovery."

Stuff and nonsense!" Pue exclaimed. "Your uncle was a desperate and revengeful man. It was not safe to trust him with unlimited power. We shall hold him, for the present, as a hostage. When we are quite sure that his power for evil is gone, he will be released. Meanwhile, rest assured that every provision has been made for his comfort. I am glad to note that you have accepted my terms, and are emptying this tremendous energy harmlessly into interstellar space. If proof is required that the world is passing through a grave crisis, at the present time, we have it."

"Proof? What sort of proof?"

"The heavens proclaim it, just as they have proclaimed most of the other crises in the world's history. If you will step outside this hut for a moment I will show you."

With some curiosity I followed him through the open door. Jerry, fully as curious, trailed along behind.

"There," said Anthony Pue, and indicated a point in the heavens.

What we saw was a comet, extraordinarily large and brilliant. An unknown, unreasoning fear caught at my throat. I heard Jerry draw a long, gasping breath.

"That," proceeded Pue, "is not a periodic comet, for no such celestial visitor is scheduled for this particular time. It is an unexpected comet, and must be traveling at a rate of speed which is inconceivable. It wasn't in the heavens last night, yet there it glows with a brightness that proclaims it close to perihelion. Do not lose the significance, Mr. Binney."

"What significance?" I asked in an awed tone.

"This: That this bright wanderer through space has appeared to warn us of the danger the world has been in through your uncle's omniopus."

"Oh, shucks!" said Jerry Mander.

CHAPTER X.

I INSIST," reiterated Pue, "that the comet celebrates the rescue of the world from the evil that threatened it because of Ajax Binney's pernicious activities."

The humanitarian's words, no less than his manner of speaking them, were highly offensive to Jerry.

"That'll do," said Jerry, truculently. "You've played hob with Ajax Binney and raised Cain with his plans, and now you're insultin' his omniopus. You are standing in the path, Anthony Pue, and if you don't start for the trail and get off of this mountain, I'm going to grab you and throw you over the cliff, no matter what your Greasers do to Ajax. I mean business. And here's something else: If Ajax isn't back here in four days—four days, mind—I'm going to Phoenix and swear out a warrant against you for abduction. That'll be all. Now start." Pue seemed inclined to argue the case. "Start!" yelled Jerry, moving toward him.

He started, and we saw his thin form vanish among the heavy shadows below the overhang.

"I've got half a notion to follow him," said Jerry, "and find out where he goes, and where he's keeping Ajax."

"Don't," I advised. "That would only complicate matters. You couldn't rescue Uncle Ajax, and you might involve him in great danger."

"I hate to feel so blamed helpless," mourned Jerry. "Pue has got the upper hand of us, but we don't have to associate with him. He r'iles me something turrible."

We sat down on the doorstep and watched the comet for an hour. It was a beautiful and an awe-inspiring sight. The head was probably a quarter the size of the full moon's disk, and a great tail bowed out behind it.

"What d'you know about comets?" asked Jerry.

"Not a thing," I answered.

"Then there's no use being skeered over something we don't know anything about. It's late, 'Dolphus, and I'm going to bed."

We both went to bed. During a restless night, I made up my mind to take a step which was unnecessary and perhaps hazardous; but I was eager to send a cablegram to Euphemia and inform her that I should be in New York at the time appointed. At breakfast, next morning, I revealed my purpose to Jerry.

"Go to Phoenix?" he cried. "You're crazy, 'Dolphus! Why, they'll have you back in the calaboose before you're in town an hour. Ajax ain't here to get you out, either, and there's no Arm to use. Let well enough alone, that's my advice."

"I'll go and come without being interfered with," I declared. "I'll disguise myself."

"How?"

"Why, in a suit of old clothes. The townspeople will think I'm a miner, or prospector. I won't stay long. If I pull out right away I can get to town by evening. I'll spend the night there and be back here by tomorrow evening. I'd like to learn something definite about this comet."

Jerry was anxious for information on that point himself. Grudgingly he agreed to my plans and helped me prepare for the journey. Arrayed in worn corduroys, slouch hat and laced knee-boots, very few would have recognized me as Adolphus J. Binney.

"I'd go along," remarked Jerry, "if it wasn't necessary for some one to stay and watch the camp. Be sure you don't let anything about that comet get away from you, 'Dolphus. I'm powerful worked up about that comet."

"I'll find out all I can, Jerry," I reassured him.

Jerry had selected Romeo for my journey, declaring that this animal had more speed and bottom than the other one. A canteen of water swung from my saddle, and a bag of rations hung alongside. It was my desire to get over the hot desert, as nearly as possible, before the sun reached the zenith and began shining its fiercest. With a grip of the hand Jerry and I parted. He had given me elaborate instructions, and I knew I could not stray from the course.

I was not used to horseback riding, and I found the journey trying and uncomfortable. I did not lose my way, however, and I came finally to my destination just on the edge of evening. Romeo was fagged, and I headed forthwith for the corral concerning which Jerry had informed me. A man was sitting on the bench by the corral gate, his head bowed and his attitude one of extreme dejection. I swung down from the saddle, stepped in front of him, and

(Continued on page twelve.)

DIDN'T KNOW

That Coffee Was Causing Her Trouble.

So common is the use of coffee as a beverage, many do not know that it is the cause of many obscure ails which are often attributed to other things.

The easiest way to find out for oneself is to quit the coffee for a while, at least, and note results. A Virginia lady found out in this way, and also learned of a new beverage that is wholesome as well as pleasant to drink. She writes:

"I am 40 years old and all my life, up to a year and a half ago, I had been a coffee drinker.

"Dyspepsia, severe headaches and heart weakness made me feel sometimes as though I was about to die. After drinking a cup or two of hot coffee, my heart would go like a clock without a pendulum. At other times it would almost stop and I was so nervous I did not like to be alone.

"If I took a walk for exercise, as soon as I was out of sight of the house I'd feel as if I was sinking and this would frighten me terribly. My limbs would utterly refuse to support me, and the pity of it all was, I did not know that coffee was causing the trouble.

"Reading in the papers that many persons were relieved of such ailments by leaving off coffee and drinking Postum, I got my husband to bring home a package. We made it according to directions and I liked the first cup. Its rich, snappy flavor was delicious.

"I have been using Postum about eighteen months and to my great joy, digestion is good, my nerves and heart are all right, in fact, I am a well woman once more, thanks to Postum."

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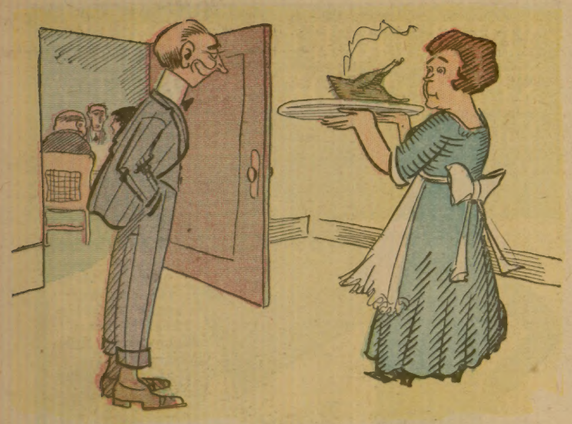


Mrs. Borden-Lodge—"I think one chicken really ought to go around among twelve boarders."

Mr. Simon Pure—"It won't go around voluntarily, but you might bring it on alive and chase it around."

Equal Rights.

"You say a pedestrian has rights the same as a motor-car?" asked the querulous person.

"Certainly," replied the policeman.

"Well, mebbe he has. But I can't help wondering what would happen to me if I went along the street making the same kind of noise as some of these automobile horns."

Changed Circumstances.

Weary Willy—"Lady, I wuz wunst a prosperous merchant. I had a luxurious home, an honorable name, an' ten bloomin' an' highly educated daughters."

Mrs. Wellmeant—"What brought you to poverty?"

Weary Willy—"My daughters insisted on marrying highly educated men, an' I hed ter support ten families."—Puck.

Caller—"Why are you going to employ another physician?"

Sick Lady—"Oh, Dr. Staebie is too absent-minded. The other day he was examining me with a stethoscope, and while he was listening he suddenly cried out, 'Well, hello! Who is it?'"

City Woodcraft.

"What are you whooping about, there on the back porch?"

"Henry, you know I have joined the girl scouts."

"Well, what are you trying to do, imitate a moose?"

"That's our distress call for a cook."

Knew What Was Coming.

"Why did you tell that man you don't smoke, when you do?"

"I had a good reason."

"Perhaps he was going to give you a cigar."

"No. I know that chap. He was going to ask me for one."

A Mistake.

"My wife," said a young Benedict, "is so exceedingly nervous at night that she scarcely sleeps at all."

"Burglars?" asked an old married man.

"Yes."

"Well, you have to expect that. My wife was like that. Every time she heard a noise downstairs she'd rout me out and send me down to investigate. After a time, however, I convinced her that if a burglar did get into the house he wouldn't make any noise at all."

"That's rather good!" exclaimed the young one. "I'll try that."

"Don't do it," pleaded the other; "for if your wife's anything like mine she'll worry every time she doesn't hear a noise downstairs!"

A Napoleon of Finance.

Friend—"You have new tellers here, I see."

Banker—"Yes. We are short of currency; and, as banks are not expected to cash checks without proper identification, we put in some new tellers who do not know anybody."

"Here, stop it! Stop it!"

"Stop what?"

"Walking to and fro like that. It's you that's making the ship roll so!"

A Considerate Flirt.

George—"So Miss Flirtie has refused you. I knew she would." Laughed at you, I suppose. Told you she wouldn't marry you if you were the last man in the world, didn't she? I know her. The cold, cruel——"

Jack—"Oh, you do her injustice. She was very kind, very considerate. She let me down easy, indeed she did."

"What did she say?"

"I don't know. She refused me in French."

The Delights of Courtship.

"I never dreamed any young man could be as attentive as George is. He showers me with candy and flowers, and takes me to no end of places. He's just lovely! Isn't courtship delightful?"

"Yes. Put off your wedding day as long as you can."

A Subscriber.

"Was that man of much assistance in our great political movement?"

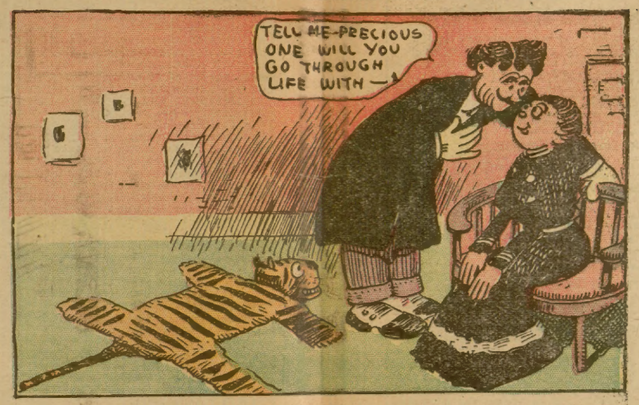
"No. He is one of those people who will subscribe to your opinions, but not to your campaign fund."

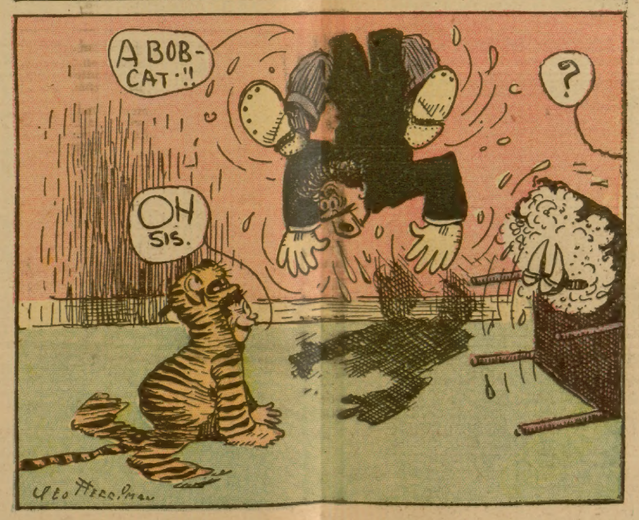
Subtle Blarney.

Waitress—"That fellow there wants some hot water to weaken his coffee!"

Restaurant Proprietor—"Flatterer!"

THE AMOURS OF MARIE ANNE MAGEE





Not Rusty.

Wife—"How did Mr. Billikins manage to pass that civil-service examination which you failed in?"

Husband—"Billikins took his little boys with him, and the boys coached him. They had only been out of school a few weeks."

Protest.

"Never count your chickens before they are hatched."

"Of course!" sneered Mr. Crosslots. "You're another of those people who want to take the chief pleasure out of the poultry business!"

Interest.

"You went to sleep during my speech," said the orator.

"A tribute to the satisfactory character of your remarks," replied the diplomatic friend. "Keeping a man wide awake is no great achievement. A dentist can do that."

A Distant Relation.

Two chance acquaintances from Ireland were talking together.

"An' so yer name is Riley?" said one. "Are yez anny relation to Tim Riley?"

"Very dishtantly," said the other. "Oi wus me mother's first child, an' Tim was the twelfth."

A Parlor Conversation.

Boy—"I want to ask a question."

Sister's Beau—"What is it?"

Boy—"When you were a little boy and fellers called on your sister, did they ever give you a penny to go out and play?"

A Civilized Community.

Stranger—"You had a good many lynchings here in former days, I understand."

Western Citizen—"That's all passed, long, long ago. We're civilized now."

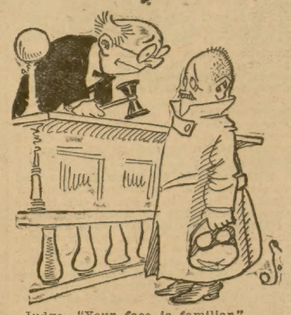
Stranger—"No more mob, law, eh?"

Western Citizen—"No, indeed. When a fellow butchers a family now, we quietly issue a warrant for him, arrest him if our police happen to stumble over him, put him into an extra comfortable cell, send him dainties and flowers, postpone the case until some of the witnesses die off, grant him new trials, and so on, until the whole business is forgotten and the Governor pardons him out. Oh, we're civilized 'way up to the handle now, I tell you."

Some Exercise.

"Duke," said the medical man, "you motor, ride horseback, and biplane. You never walk. Your legs will become atrophied from lack of exercise."

"My legs get some exercise, doctor. I kick the servants quite frequently."



Judge—"Your face is familiar."

Chauffeur—"Yes, sir; you gave me thirty days yesterday—I'm running the jailer's car now."

A Considerate Spouse.

Rich Old Husband—"I admit that you come of a famous family, while I belong to the newly rich; but is that any reason why you should always be indirectly reminding folks of that fact?"

Charming Young Wife—"I? How?"

"You are forever talking about your ancestors."

"Really, my dear, you do me injustice. My reason for keeping people reminded of my great-grandfather, is to make you seem younger by contrast."

Methods of the Schools.

"My doctor ordered two weeks at the seashore."

"He's a homeopath, isn't he?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Two weeks is a small dose. I'd go to an allopath and see if I couldn't get a trip to Europe."

A False Alarm.

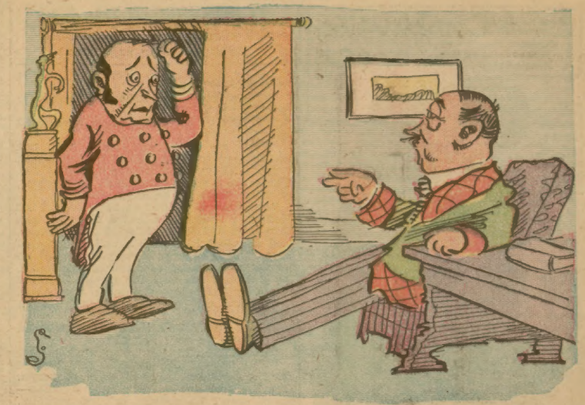
"It is absurd for Bixby to have such a loud horn on that little automobile of his."

"Yes. He makes pedestrians think something is coming and then disappoints them."

Tried a Bluff.

Wife (angrily)—"This is a nice time to come home."

Hub—"Glad to hear you say so, my dear. I was afraid you might think it rather late."



His Master—"You say you saw him through the keyhole. I don't see how you could stoop to such a trick as looking through a keyhole."

Jeems—"Pardon me, sir, but I couldn't very well see through the keyhole without stooping."

Pay Day.

Creditor—"I should like to know when you are going to pay this bill; I can't come here every day in the week."

Debtor—"What day would suit you best?"

Creditor—"Saturday."

Debtor—"Very well; then you can call every Saturday."

Some Recognition.

"Governor," demanded the leader, "you must do something for us suffragettes."

"My dear lady, I can't give you the ballot."

"But you must do something."

"Well," said the Governor, as he eyed her square jaw, "I'll appoint you a colonel on my staff."

Tall Youth—"For that box of candy I gave Lucille I spent my last cent.

Friend Artie—"She told me it didn't taste as if you spent more than that for it."

The Ones to Avoid.

Old Man—"If you would select a good wife, my young friend, you must avoid the descendants of a certain famous woman."

Young Man—"I shall certainly heed your advice. Who was she?"

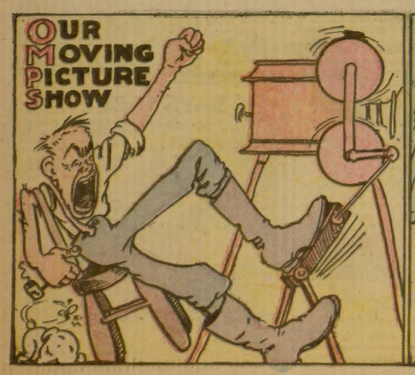
Old Man—"Eve."

Prattle.

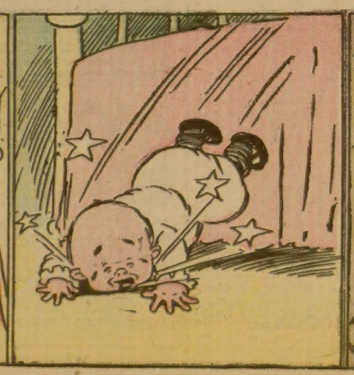
"Don't you enjoy the merry prattle of little children?" asked the sentimentalist.

"Yes," replied Mr. Growcher. "I like to hear them prattle. It seems a shame that so many of them are going to grow up and drop this innocent chatter in order to discuss the tariff."

SOME AUTUMN FANCIES

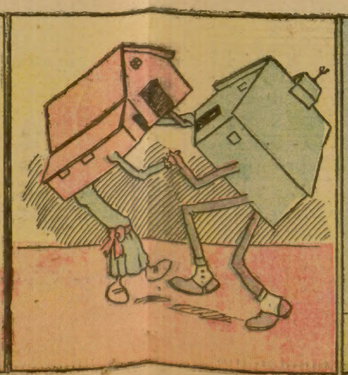


An Early Fall.

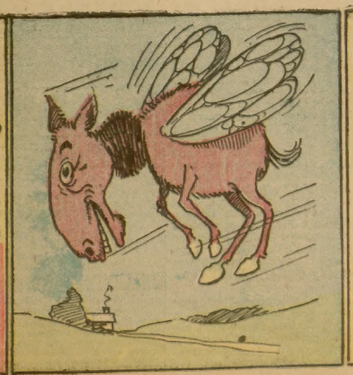


A Husking Bee.

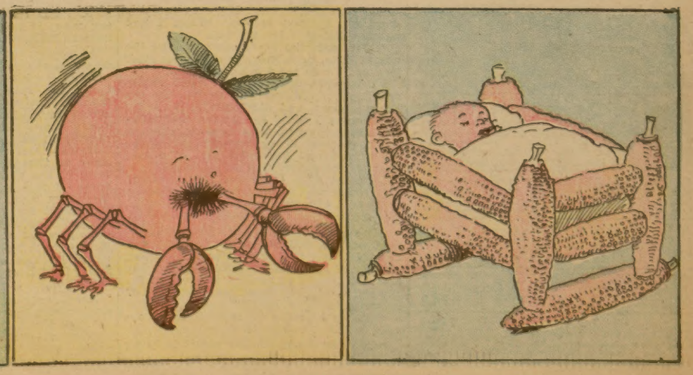
A Barn Dance.



A Horse Fly.



A Crab Apple.



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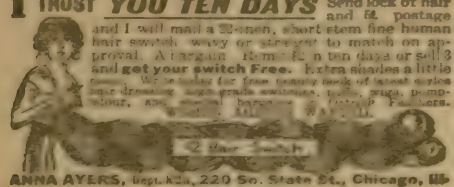

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The Wrecked Planet.

(Continued from page nine.)

asked if he was the proprietor of the corral.

"That's me," he answered, scarcely looking up.

"I'd like to leave my horse here until morning," said I.

"Then go ahead and leave him, but you'll have to take care o' him yourself. I don't know what you're travelin' for. There ain't no use travelin', or workin', or doin' much of anythin' else."

Somewhat mystified by his words, I led Romeo through the gate, ushered him into a vacant stall, stripped off the gear, and supplied him with a ration of baled hay. I had watered him at the canal, so he wasn't in need of anything to drink. As I passed out into the street, I halted again by the dejected man on the bench.

"What's the trouble, my friend?" I asked.

"Great grief," he cried, "you don't mean to say you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, about the comet. It's headed for the earth an' we're all goin' to smash. Bymby—and not so very long at that—there won't be nothin' left of anythin'. Oh, it fair gives me the creeps! But go on, stranger, an' leave me to my meditatin'. I'm tryin' to think of all the people I've cheated an' been mean to, so'st I can square up before the finish."

I can't say that I felt any alarm. Ignorance and superstition are always imagining dire things in the presence of the Unknown. Nevertheless, there was a little chill of wonder running up and down my spine as I moved on into the town.

There was a hush of fear and apprehension over the whole place. As I passed through the Mexican quarter, I heard a thin feminine voice quivering over a paternoster. The voice came through the window of a darkened adobe. Here and there, as I pushed on into Washington street, men and women had congregated in groups and were talking in whispers. Once I heard a piercing shriek and a woman fell in a faint; and once a man gave a loud shout and started into the dark at a frantic run.

My skin grew clammy and I felt a lump rising in my throat. Fear is contagious, and the icy edge of it was touching my heart. I flung back my shoulders and braced myself against the prevailing oppression.

The clerks in the telegraph office were bending over their instruments mechanically. Now and then a message was given to a boy, who raced away with it. I wrote out my cablegram and handed it to the receiving clerk.

"What's the use?" he inquired languidly.

"What's the use of what?" I demanded.

"Why, of anything."

"I don't know what's the use," I returned tartly, "but kindly get that message on the wires."

I paid him the toll and went off to a restaurant for a hot supper. Hot suppers must have been the exception rather than the rule, that night. The restaurant was deserted. There was only one man there and he was reading a newspaper. He looked up to peer at me dubiously.

"Have I ever done anything to you that wasn't right?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," I answered, with a flicker of amusement. "This is the first time I ever saw you."

"Good! Let's shake hands, anyhow. We're all brothers, and we're all bound to be snuffed out at the same time. Some satisfaction in that, eh?"

"There'll be more satisfaction in it," I went on, as I shook his hand, "if you'll give me something to eat."

"Eat?" he asked, mildly surprised; you want to eat?"

"Of course I do," I said, "I'm hungry."

"Well, well!" he muttered, putting aside the paper and starting off to prepare the meal with his own hands.

Hot coffee, cold meat and cold potatoes were all I could secure. When I had finished I asked for my bill.

"Bill?" said the proprietor; "what's the use of bills, or money, or anything else? You don't owe me a cent, stranger."

I dropped a half dollar in front of him and went on down the street. In the thoroughfare, and dimly outlined on the house-tops, I could see people examining the comet through telescopes, binoculars, opera-glasses. They were quiet, for the most part, and the quiet was of a sort that played havoc with the nerves.

In front of a large building a crowd had collected. Stereopticon bulletins were being thrown on a screen. I halted to read some of the bulletins.

"The comet, according to Prof. d'Alembert of the University of Paris, has a solid nucleus that measures 8,800 miles, about the same as Gambert's comet. The scientific world is puzzled to account for the extraordinary speed with which it is approaching the earth."

This, and all the other bulletins, were read without comment.

"All over the earth the result is being calmly awaited. Scientists assembled in New York exhort the people not to be overcome by their fears. Very probably the comet will cross the orbit of the earth by a safe margin, and not impinge upon its surface. If the earth passes through the comet's tail, it will do no more than it has done thousands of times before, and without detriment to human life on the planet."

This bulletin, mildly encouraging, was succeeded by another after the lapse of a few moments:

"What effect the attraction of the earth will have on the speed of the comet is not known. This comet is a rara avis in the fields of celestial phenomena. Astronomers do not know what to make of it, for it is behaving in a manner that sets most of the laws at defiance. If collision comes it can hardly be under a week."

"What's a rara avis?" inquired a man at my elbow.

"Rare bird," I answered.

He chuckled, and that chuckle went to my heart most soothingly. "Nice thing to call a comet," said he.

"What will happen if collision occurs? No one knows. If the comet hits us obliquely, it may leave some of its nucleus behind, or take some of our planet along with it. If the impact is direct, the tangential velocity of the earth would probably receive a sudden check or a sudden impulse; or it might be dissipated in dust and scattered through the eternal void; or it might withstand the blow so that the comet would glance off and go on about its business."

We stood there for hours, like a crowd on election night awaiting the "returns." Reading the bulletins one by one, it was easy to infer that the scientific thought of the day was, vulgarly speaking, "up in the air." The comet had not been telescopically visible at any time previous to the night it blossomed in the heavens so brilliantly. It had seemed to leap out of space like a tiger from its lair, ravenous to fall upon the earth and tear it to pieces.

The numbing horror of wholesale annihilation, fostered by these speculative messages, was relieved by two bulletins which we could all understand and about which there was no speculation whatever. It was the relief of knowing that if a greater evil overwhelmed us, a lesser could not come to pass.

One of these bulletins ran thus:

"The Old World is in arms against the New! Germany and Japan, having formulated their alliance and obtained the moral if not the active support of every country in the Eastern Hemisphere, are ready to hurl their Dreadnoughts against us from either side, and to unload great armies upon our shores from vast fleets of transports. Further action, however, has been suspended pending hostile demonstrations by the comet."

A fierce regret plucked at my heart. Had Anthony Pue kept hands off my Uncle Ajax, disasters threatening our loved country by sea could easily have been averted. Pue, in his fanatic zeal, had overreached himself. He had—but why let my indignation gallop so furiously? Anything my uncle might have done, or that Pue might not have done, could in no wise have affected the result: that comet was infinitely more perilous than a world in arms.

The second bulletin, dealing with affairs which the crowd in the street could more easily comprehend, had to do with The Ten:

"The gentlemen who own the United States are meeting abroad, this year. Is it because they fear the people whom their commercial activities have relegated to the position of serfs? Or have they removed themselves from the zone of war from motives of personal safety? It is whispered in high places that neither of these explanations is correct, but that The Ten, in order to preserve at least some portion of their vast wealth, will barter with Japan and Germany for the independence of the United States. Should negotiations fail, then the country may be sold outright, and the inhabitants thrown in to bind the bargain!"

A far-fetched statement, this, but it was a dangerous sentiment, often played up, and for no other purpose than to inflame the masses. The crowd awoke from its lethargy of awe and fear, inspired by the comet, and gave vent to angry mutterings and a shaking of clenched fists.

It was late, and I turned and slipped clear of the throng and made my way back to the corral where I had left my horse. I was perfectly safe from arrest. The town was too much concerned over the comet to pay any attention to me. Had I desired, I could have slept out the remainder of the night at the Adams House, but I preferred a bed of haybales in the open corral, with that malevolent heavenly visitor leering down at me.

Very early in the morning I saddled and bridled Romeo and began my return to Ajax Mountain. I had forwarded my cablegram—which perhaps was a useless proceeding—and I had acquired information of a very unsettling nature, and yet my trip was undoubtedly worth while.

Evening was almost at hand as the

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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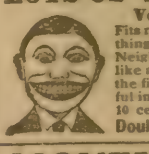

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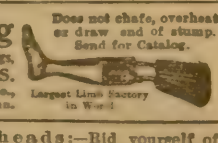

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The Borgia Shadow

Or, THE SHE-WOLF OF FLORENCE

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE RED BRIDAL.

THE beautiful and passionate Countess Lucia seemed to see no way out of the hated nuptials to which Catherine Borgia had condemned her. That she should become the bride of "The Toad" was torture. She saw that the way to Andrea's heart was forever blocked to her, and that her future was to be wasted on the hunchback. To Cosmo the bridal was equally obnoxious. His abduction of Francesca had not furthered his plans for her hand, and when he held her captive in his own palace he was as far as ever from the consummation of his desires.

Lucia's father, the Duke, feared to cross the She-Wolf in the slightest degree. Not that he did not love his daughter, for he did, but the Borgia shadow withered his hopes of seeing her the wife of some one worthy of her, and therefore he silently acquiesced in the coming wedding.

The fated night came and found Lucia adorning herself in her richest robes. Her countenance was as white as snow, but her regal beauty seemed accentuated thereby, and her maids whispered to one another that their mistress was to be the loveliest bride that ever trod the marble floors of the Borgia Palace.

Lucia was even merry during the arraying. She laughed and chatted gayly with her attendants, and chose the garments that would best adorn her supple figure.

Meantime the wedding guests were assembling in the grand chamber of the palace. No one but the haughty Catherine thought of the man who stood in the gloom of the underground dungeon and counted the minutes that time ticked off in the darkness.

There was no hope for Andrea Urbino. Having rejected the freedom which Lucia had offered him, he was more than ever in the coils of fate. But his heart was firm in the love he had given Francesca, and he was not the one to throw it aside in order to purchase liberty at the expense of all his future peace.

Back and forth in the darkness he walked, wondering what was occurring in the world above him. Where was Francesca? If she had not fallen into Catherine's hands, then the machinations of Cosmo, the hunchback, had been successful.

How he longed to break the bars of his confinement and meet that wretch face to face with his good blade! How he yearned to hold its point at Cosmo's throat and then thrust it through his squat neck, spitting him as he would a hare!

Out from the tower of St. Stefano pealed the long and lonely hours. It was the only sound that penetrated the cell, the stone walls shutting out all others, and when the last notes died away, he went back to his rest and felt his very brain whirl in its torture.

Into the palace at a certain hour passed the expectant bridegroom. Cosmo had clothed himself in his newest garments, and for once did not seem to be himself. Those who saw him whispered that "The Toad" was really half a gentleman in appearance, and Cosmo seemed pleased with the compliment.

"Where is the bride?" flitted from lip to lip. "Where is the Countess Lucia?"

At length a carriage drawn by four white horses halted in front of the palace. Duke Camaro alighted and handed out his daughter, then he led her up the broad steps flanked by Catherine's liveried menials, and overhead were scores of lights to show all Florence the beautiful girl who was to wed the satyr.

Lucia looked supreme in her dazzling robes, the diamond dust glittered on her person, but those who noticed her as she came on with her father saw in the depths of her eyes a look that almost alarmed them.

Just inside the great doors stood the She-Wolf of Florence. There was a haughtiness, not unmixed with triumph, in her mien, and her gaze alighted on Lucia as she came on, bending the knee slightly when she had passed the portal.

Catherine reached out her jeweled hand and led the Countess forward. The brilliant lights in the grand chamber fell upon the pair, and a murmur of applause ran around it.

"You are well, my dear?" whispered Catherine.

"I am, thanks, Princess," replied Lucia, meeting her gaze.

"And happy?"

"What bride should be unhappy on her wedding night?"

Catherine smiled.

"I welcome you into the Borgia domain," she answered. "You will find it paradise and joy to the end of your life."

Lucia dropped her eyes at this, and her lips parted, but no sound came from them. Was she really thinking of her bridal at that hour? Did she not see a human form standing against a stone wall and hear a voice crying for Francesca?

Over the gorgeous assemblage burst a sound of fascinating music. It trembled the air, and at the same time the room was filed with a subtle but pleasing perfume, the favorite odor of the Borgias. Lucia was conducted to a handsome dais at one end of the bridal room and seated in a magnificent chair. Above her head was a double monogram in jewels, the wedding of the houses of Borgia and Camaro. She glanced at it and shivered.

"Are you ill, love?" whispered Catherine, noticing the tremble.

"I am not ill, Princess."

Presently the portal at the far end of the room was flung open, and a servitor in red announced Lord Cosmo. The hunchback glided forward, attended by several nobles, and, ascending the steps of the dais, saluted Lucia, who looked at him with a singular smile. At a wave of Catherine's hand the priest advanced and crept rather clumsily up the steps, for he was a fat man and slow of motion.

Suddenly there rang through the chamber a loud voice which penetrated to every corner.

"Who objects tonight to the marriage of the Countess of Camaro and the Duke of Borgia?" it said.

Instantly the subtle figure of Lucia was seen to start from the chair, and lifting her hand, she exclaimed in startling tones in answer to the herald:

"God!"

Never before had she looked so beautiful as then. Catherine started and grew pale beneath her rouge. Every eye was fastened upon Lucia.

"God objects!" rang out once more the voice of the Countess. "He objects to these hellish nuptials, to the mingling of the pure blood of Camaro with the tainted stream that flows through Borgian veins! Know ye all that this union is not of my seeking. I have shunned it as I would shun the nest of the deadly viper. The man to whom I have been affianced is the most despicable creature in God's kingdom. He bears the name of the most hated family in all Italy, and, what is more, he is the nephew of the She-Wolf, who kills without mercy with her subtle potions, heartless, dishonored of the angels, damned by her Maker to expiate her infamies in the bottomless pit!"

This terrible tirade fell upon all ears like a thunderbolt from a cloudless vault of blue. It took Catherine a full minute to become in the slightest particular composed. Her regal figure suddenly sprang to its full stature.

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As Texas Guinan had to perform at the matinee it seemed the easiest thing in the world to arrange an interview without consulting her. The vigilant stage doorkeeper was easily passed. The dressing-room was hospitably turned open by a maid, and then—well, Miss Guinan, that is, what is left of her, appeared.

"So you have come to learn the story of my weight reduction, have you?" said Texas in her breezy style, with her glorious countenance beaming in smiles at her supreme gladness, realizing how appreciative the world was in bestowing admiration and applause upon her, all on account of the new glory of her form which she transformed almost as if by magic with her own marvelous new treatment.

"While you are not going to get away with my secret," said Texas, "it is true that my seventy pounds of weight reduction was brought about with my own delightful treatment, but it cost me a pretty sum of money to learn of it, and I am not giving my secret of how I lost my weight free to reporters, but I have written a book telling all about this wondrous new treatment which rescued me from the thralldom of fat. This book has just come off the press and is offered free to fat burdened men and women, as I early learned in life that the **only way to know happiness was to give it to others,** and if by letting the world know of this harmless, quick method of reducing weight I can do a great good, then I will feel that I have not lived in vain."

"But won't you give me an inkling of its component parts? Just a suggestion as to what it is, or will I have to be content to read your free book telling all about it?"

"That is exactly it," said Texas, "but I don't mind telling you what the treatment is not. It does not consist of internal drugs or medicine; there is nothing to take internally. Neither is there any pink colored camphor water, or worthless, harmful stuff to rub on the body. There is no sweating, no bandages, no Turkish baths. The treatment does not consist of a single exercise or physical culture of any description. There is no diet. One may absolutely eat all the food they desire of any kind, and go right on reducing without depriving themselves in any way.

"There are no enemas or flushing of the colon, no harmful massaging, no sweating garments to wear, no immerging yourself in hot baths with the tub filled with **obesity water** or **epsom salts,** nor does it include any medical concoction of any doctor, and it has nothing to do with any drug store prescription to have filled. There is no formula to carry out, no soaps to rub on the skin; neither is it a religious faith cure or Christian Science stunt. It is not a vibratory electric massage treatment, mental suggestion—no, and it is not a belt or mechanical device of any kind.

"I have tried many such fakes. I tried drugs, pills, capsules, harmful concoctions to rub on the body. I have tried sweating and taking Turkish baths, exercising, physical culture and everything known to science without result, and without losing weight. As I was about to despair and give up in disgust all further efforts to reduce my enormous weight, which was two hundred and four pounds, I, by lucky accident, learned of the most simple, harmless, rapid, safest fat reducing treatment on earth. I tried it on myself with astonishing results. My friends stood aghast in amazement, marveling at the wondrous change in my appearance. My fat just rolled away. After the first three days I noticed it beginning to leave me. My reduction grew greater and greater until finally, I was almost appalled with delight when I realized the stupendous success of my efforts and when I awoke to the fact that I had reduced 70 pounds of my fat without leaving a wrinkle, and the glory of my new figure and the grace and beauty of my curves gave me the admiration of the world. I enjoyed the triumph of my life and the success of my whole career when my manager, Mr. Shubert, on account of my glorious new figure, made me the star of the 'Passing Show,' and, mind you, this very same manager had said I was doomed to oblivion just a short time before when I tipped the scales at two hundred and four pounds. I was crushed and bewildered when he told me he could not give me a part in the 'Passing Show' unless I could reduce my enormous weight, and my heart hangs heavy with the memory of the fat days that are gone when my fat, ungainly figure made me realize that I was doomed to despair and failure.

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God's masterpiece and the most fascinating actress in America.

"My success in reducing my own fat proves that there is no such word as 'fail.' I simply would not be resigned to my fate, and although everyone said 'Texas, there is no way out of your dilemma,' and told me that no fat reducing specialist could reduce my weight, I determined not to give up in despair, with the result that I absolutely conquered my fat. My new, great book on obesity, which gives full particulars of my simple, safe, quick, harmless fat reducing treatment, is now ready and will be sent free to all who wish to reduce their weight any number of pounds."

It is simply astonishing the furor this new treatment is causing among the intimate friends of Miss Guinan to whom she has given it. A letter from the world's most famous dancer, La Petite Adelaide, says: "Dear Miss Guinan: Let me congratulate you upon the high excellence of your remarkable new obesity treatment, which I find reduces me as rapidly as I desire. Sincerely, Adelaide." Other letters of praise and gratitude are pouring in to Miss Guinan from all parts of the country from those who have reduced with her successful treatment. Louise Brunelle, the Quaker maid, one of the earth's greatest beauties, states she lost 10 pounds the first week with this astonishing new treatment. It is said this remarkable treatment is not unlike the treatment used by the court ladies and famous actresses of the Old World, who have been using a similar remedy throughout Europe, and the remarkable thing is that Texas Guinan is the first to introduce it in America. Her free book, which is now ready for distribution, should be requested by all who desire quick reduction. It is written in a fascinating style. It explains how, by her treatment, Texas Guinan, who is acknowledged America's most successful star, reduced her own weight seventy pounds, and conquered the monster FAT.

This glorious little woman is doing her utmost to benefit fat men and women who are in need of a perfect home treatment. Everything will be sent to you in a perfectly plain package so that in your own room, away from all prying eyes, you may plan to reduce your weight at once. Miss Guinan wants to help all who are burdened with superfluous fat, and thereby make life really worth while.

Write her at once, and learn the anguish she felt when her girlish beauty started to develop to abnormal proportions. Read of the tears she wept when that monster "fat" made her realize that she must give up her profession and fade into oblivion. Learn how she experimented, how she tried everything and, finally, with patient effort and determination she conquered her fat. Learn of these things so you may improve your own form and destroy your own fat so it will not be longer necessary for you to suffer the jibes and sneers of others. Remember there is no exercising or physical culture of any description in her treatment, no harmful massage or worthless poison body lotions. You may eat as many meals daily as you desire and go right on rapidly reducing. A most astonishing part of this fat reducing treatment is that it does not produce wrinkles or leave the skin flabby. All who have been dieting and starving themselves, trying to reduce their weight, and who have been taking exercises and internal baths and who have been taking internal and external remedies should write for a copy of her great FREE book entitled "RAPID WEIGHT REDUCTION WITHOUT EXERCISE, DIET OR INTERNAL REMEDIES," so that you may start to reduce your burdensome fat as rapidly as you desire. Simply write a brief letter or a postcard and ask for her new book. Everything will be sent absolutely free. **Do not send any money,** because it is **absolutely free.**

Address **TEXAS GUINAN, Suite 698 Lanco Building, Los Angeles, California.**

"On with the ceremony!" leaped from her lips. "The Countess is mad. She will yet bless the nuptials which she frowns upon tonight."

The priest took his last step. Cosmo, gnashing his teeth, held out his hand to Lucia, but she flung it aside, and the next moment stood before them all with the point of a poinard at her breast.

"Better the bride of Death than the wife of a Borgia!" she shouted. "Better the tomb than the bridal couch with such a mate!"

The spectators stood horrified.

"On with the ceremony," repeated Catherine. "It is Borgia that stoops tonight."

In another instant there rose from almost every throat a peal of horror. The figure of Lucia Camaro tottered on the bridal dias and then fell at Cosmo's feet. There was a wild rush for the door, the white-faced guests scrambling to get beyond the sight that rendered them speechless.

Catherine, abating none of her haughtiness, stepped down, drawing the hem of her white robe aside lest it should come in contact with the rivulet of red that was trickling down the marble steps. Cosmo glanced at his aunt and knitted his brows.

At that moment there rushed into the room a guard whose face was as white as the foam of the Arno. His eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets. He bounded to where Catherine stood and whispered to her in inaudible tones.

"What! rebellion?" those nearest to her heard her say.

"Aye, Princess," replied the guard. "The streets throng with armed mobs. They are crying for the blood of the Borgias."

"They shall have all the blood they want!" hissed Catherine.

She turned and fled from the chamber. Duke Camaro lifted the form of his daughter from the floor and bore it away. His features were set in stone.

Catherine ran to a window which overlooked the beautiful plaza in front of the palace. What she saw caused her to set her white teeth hard. The people of Florence had turned at last upon the She-Wolf.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SMILING DEATH.

THE hour of retribution had struck. Before the palace was a boisterous sea of maddened humanity. Armed men were rushing in every direction; now and then they stopped and shook their weapons at the pallid face at the window.

Catherine knew that she was living on the crust of a volcano which was liable to burst forth at any moment and put an end to her infamy. The poisoner of Florence could see in the mobs beneath her the casting of the net of vengeance.

For five minutes she gazed at the scene, and then silently withdrew. Already there was commotion in the palace. The wedding guests had hurried away, and their carriages were carrying them to shelter ere they could share the doom of the reigning house.

"It is rebellion!" cried Catherine's husband, encountering her in one of the corridors.

"The rats are squeaking," she returned, smiling bitterly.

"The whole populace is mad," pursued Duke Fillippo, and then he looked reproachfully at his wife.

"Why don't you call out the guards?" she demanded.

"Madame, the guards have been slaughtered. Some of them have been tossed into the Arno."

"The cowards!"

"Not cowards, madame," returned the Duke, coldly. "They resisted to the last, poor fellows."

"Bar the palace doors!"

"Think ye they will long resist the mob if it attacks?"

Catherine seemed to turn into a statue of ice.

"Where is Cosmo?" she asked.

"He has left the palace."

"Pray Heaven the man-dogs may get him ere he reaches his own," she replied.

"Hark! They are at the gates even now," said Fillippo. "They want the blood of the Borgias."

Catherine hastened from the spot and vanished like a ghost. Down below the rebels were thundering at the gates of the handsome palace, their weapons battering them in wild fury, and all the time rose the cry for blood.

The She-Wolf, flying down the corridor, almost collided with a figure that rose at her very feet. It was the cowled man who was to have performed the wedding ceremony in the grand chamber. Catherine stopped and held out her hands.

"Shrive me!" cried she. "Shrive your mistress, Father Anselm."

The little priest drew back and looked at her.

"You will not?" shouted the woman, suddenly darting forward and clutching his shoulders. "Then take the farewell of Catherine Borgia!"

She hurled him against the marble wall as though he were a child, and he sank at her very feet. There was no further stop for her until she opened the door of her secret chamber and found herself in privacy once more.

Meantime the rebellion was at its height.

The "rats," as Catherine had called the men of Florence, were swarming from every quarter. The dark holes vomited forth their hordes, the better places spat out men of loftier caliber, but the two streams merged into one with a single goal, the Borgia palace. The servitors crouched among the halls or fled shrieking from the impending doom. The tyranny of years was to be wiped out in blood.

The great doors yielded at last to the incessant fury of the men-tigers. Into the palace poured the roaring mass, crying aloud for the head of the She-Wolf. There was no one to oppose them. Fillippo had taken refuge in a subterranean passage which led to the river, abandoning his wife, leaving her to the fate she had invoked by her cruelties. There had never been much love between the pair, and Fillippo knew that for years he had lived in the shadow of the poisoned cup or the dagger.

A part of the mob, catching sight of a running figure, had followed Cosmo to his abode. "The Toad," dodging in and out among the shadows, had hoped to escape, but the furies were at his heels. He reached the steps of his palace and darted toward his rooms.

"Lock the doors!" he shouted to the trembling menial who shrank back at his colorless face. "Don't let the rats in here!"

The man flung himself against the heavy portal and swung it to. A lock clicked, and Cosmo flung himself into a chair.

"A fine bridal I've had!" he chuckled, sarcastically. "But not so fine a funeral, mayhap."

Up the steps came the tigers. Cosmo drew his sword and looked at the pulseless slave who fell back from the portal. It did not take long for the devils to reach their prey.

Two minutes later something descended from one of the windows and crashed on the stones below. One of the watchers there turned it over and looked into the mangled face of the hunchback.

But what, meantime, was transpiring in the great palace of the Borgias?

The mob was howling through its lofty rooms, cutting down the priceless paintings from the walls and ripping up the beautiful tapestries which were the pride of the world. They were searching for the She-Wolf.

"Below to the underground dungeons!" suddenly cried a voice. "It is there Andrea Urbino is if he has escaped the fangs."

The tigers turned and darted below.

Underneath the palace were cells which held secrets at which the world could well shudder. Routing out a servitor from his hiding-place, the furies took him along, and made him guide them with the point of a sword at his back.

At last the man stopped before an iron door and pointed silently at it. The attack was made at once. When the door fell inward, half a dozen men rushed forward and pulled out a human form. It was Andrea!

"Head us for the She-Wolf!" cried they.

He looked at them in silence.

"I know not where she hides," he said, when he found his tongue.

In one of the upper corridors they caught a trembling maid who had ventured back to her room for a little keepsake. Held against the wall with the points of a dozen rapiers at her throat, she was forced to disclose Catherine's retreat. The mob flung her aside and rushed away.

There was but the bare semblance of a door where Catherine was. The mob fell against it and played havoc with the portal.

The leader who rushed into the lofty chamber fell back at sight of Catherine, who was seated at the table in her armchair. She had changed her dress, and now in the glory of her wonderful wardrobe she looked more the Queen than at any time in her life. There was a smile on her face, and her hand touched a chalice that stood on the table. The men halted and stared.

The smile seemed to deepen, the eyes appeared to laugh in their orbed sockets, and Catherine Borgia was yet alive to greet her foes. Alive?

One of the men sprang forward and shouted vengeance into her face. She did not answer save by that smile which had fascinated scores of men.

"Death to the She-Wolf!" arose on every side.

"Down with the Borgian spawn!"

A young surgeon threw himself before the mob.

"Messires," cried he, "Catherine Borgia is dead!"

"Dead? But she smiles!"

The surgeon picked up the chalice and held it between him and the light.

"It is the Smiling Death," he went on. "To taste this poison is to die with a smile on one's face."

Slowly the mob retreated. Their iron shoes clattered down the grand staircase and out into the street to tell every one that the She-Wolf had expiated her crimes.

All that night Florence remained in the grasp of the bloody pack. It was not until the sun rose that the blood lust abated, although the victims had been very few.

In the Strozzi palace, Andrea, looking into the face of Francesca, saw the old love-light in her eyes, and reached out his arms and took her to his heart.

"No longer in the Borgia Shadow, love!", he said, as he smothered her with kisses.

"Nay, Andrea; the sun shall ever shine upon our wedded lives."

They went to the window and looked out over the silvery Arno and the flower gardens where the birds sang and the white swans sailed majestically on the wind-kissed waters. Love had triumphed and peace had come.

No more the dread of the deadly bouquet, no more the poisoned cup or the secret poinard, for she who had used them was still in her chair, with the smile of bitter triumph on her face.

When the new life came to the lovers, Francesca went one day through the Strozzi gardens and dropped a chaplet of roses upon a little grave where slept Momo, the page, who had intervened to save her from the dagger of the Black Cardinal.

And when a little boy came to cheer and make brighter than ever the House of Strozzi, she called him Momo, and held him up to Andrea for a kiss.

The End.

* * *

Wanted a Big One.

Arthur's mother sent him to the hardware store to buy a thermometer. He stated his wants to the salesman.

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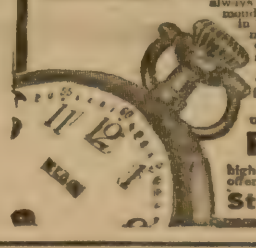

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ANECDOTES OF PEOPLE

Assessing a Goat.

William Jennings Bryan once visited Cornell University, and while being entertained at dinner by a prominent member of the legal fraternity he told the following story:

"Once out in Nebraska I went to protest against my real estate assessment, and one of the things of which I particularly complained was assessing a goat at $25. I claimed that a goat was not real property in the legal sense of the word and should not be assessed. One of the assessors, a pleasant-faced old man, obligingly said that I could go upstairs with him and we would look over the rules and regulations and see what could be done.

"We looked over the rules and finally the old man asked:

"'Does your goat run loose on this road?'

"'Well, sometimes,' said I, wondering what the penalty was for that dreadful offense.

"'Does he butt?' again queried the old man.

"'Yes,' I answered, 'he butts.'

"'Well,' said the old man, looking at me, 'this rule says tax all property running and abutting on the highway. I don't see that I can do anything for you. Good day, sir.'"

They Guessed Right.

A large German woman held up a long line of people at the money order window in a postoffice the other day, and all because her memory had failed. She wanted to send some money to her son, a sailor on a merchant steamer then in foreign water, but when she presented the application at the window the clerk noticed that the address was lacking.

"Well, where do you want to send it?" he asked. "We can't give you the money order unless you know the name of the place."

"Yah, dot's de trouble," she replied. "I didn't pring his letter and I can't remember der name of der town, but it's some place out by China dot sounds like der noise a motor-car makes."

The two clerks looked at each other dubiously.

"What kind of a noise does a motor-car make?" asked one.

"Honk, honk," suggested the other.

"Yah, dot's it," exclaimed the woman.

"'Honk, konk,' dot's de place."

"Fill it in Hong Kong," said the clerk, and she paid over the money with a sigh of relief.

The Stubborn Cows.

On a farm in South Africa there was a kaffir whom the men used to call "Coalscuttle." He milked the cows morning and evening, but one day, "the boss" came to his hut, bringing a three legged stool.

"Here, Coalscuttle, is a good stool from home," said he. "You can use it when you are milking."

"Yes, boss," said the darky.

That evening he went a-milking as usual, holding the stool at arm's length, and looking a trifle bewildered.

A full hour elapsed and he did not come home. At length he arrived, bruised and battered, the cans shapeless, and not a drop of milk in them.

"Way, Coalscuttle, what's wrong?" said the boss, appearing.

"Ah!" came the answer, "him berry good stool, massa, but de cows won't sit on it."

It Was All Right.

At the annual fair that is held at a small town in Russia a man observed a gypsy and a Pole haggling over the sale of a horse. When the transaction was over he asked the gypsy how much he had got for the animal. The gypsy opened his hand and showed a ten-ruble note—worth about $5.

"But isn't that very cheap?"

"No," said the gypsy. "The horse is lame."

The man then sought out the Pole, to whom he said, "You have given ten rubles for a lame horse."

The Pole smiled knowingly and remarked: "He is as sound as you or I. I saw he was badly shod, and that was all."

The inquirer returned to the gypsy and reported what the Pole had said. Then, with a significant wink, the gypsy whispered:

"He's as lame as a two-legged stool! I had him badly shod on purpose to make people believe that that was the cause of his limp."

When the Pole was told this he seemed for a moment taken back and hung his head; then he heaved a sigh and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, well," he said, "it's all right; it was a bad ten-ruble note."

The Magic Word.

Attorney Ephraim Lipschutz recently had a client who was to come up for a hearing before Magistrate Gallagher.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Lipschutz of his client when the latter came to him with the case.

"James P. O'Brode," was the reply.

"What is your middle name?"

"Patrick."

"Well, now, when Magistrate Gallagher asks you your name, say 'James Patrick O'Brode,' and don't forget the Patrick."

"Sure, I won't," promised the client.

When O'Brode was arraigned and Magistrate Gallagher asked the first question, "What is your name?" the prisoner said in stentorian tones. "James Patrick O'Brode, and don't forget the Patrick."

He was discharged.

Spoiled Their Fun.

A "weary Willie" of the genus hobo lay down to enjoy a noonday siesta under an apple tree beside the road. The season was midsummer, the sun was piping hot, and the hobo's nap disposed him to good humor with all the world. So it was that on opening his eyes he lay for some time observing the flies and the mosquitoes swarming on his greasy clothes, until up buzzed a busy mosquito, lit on Mr. Tramp's breast and stung him.

Aroused to action by the impertinence, the tramp indignantly brushed off the insects, exclaiming:

"Just for that now, every one of you get right off!"

A Great Invention.

Two Highlanders, being in Glasgow for the first time, were taking a walk through the city. They encountered, much to their astonishment, a water cart wetting the street. Never having seen anything of the kind before, James, under a mistaken idea, ran after the cart and cried out to the driver:

"Hey, man—hey, man, yer losin' a' yer water!"

His companion, much annoyed at James' want of knowledge, ran after him, caught him by the arm and said, rather testily:

"James, man, dinna be showin' yer ignorance. D'yer no see it's to keep the laddies off the back o' the cairt!"

Another Reason.

A young man in Washington, who many months ago hung up his shingle as "attorney at law" has not yet been overwhelmed with clients. A friend, entering the office one day, observed on the desk a cheap alarm clock.

"Taking it home, eh?" he observed. "Good thing at this time of the year. Every one is liable to oversleep these mornings."

The lawyer smiled.

"I have not purchased that clock for the reasons you mentioned. I keep it here to wake me when it's time to go home."

The Wrecked Planet.

(Continued from page twelve.)

wearied Romeo bore me up the trail and past the overhang. I was surprised to hear voices in excited talk near the cabin, and the surprise grew on me as I advanced closer and recognized the tones of some of the speakers.

A glow of lamplight, falling through the open door, brought out clearly the forms of Jerry Mander, of Anthony Pue, of three Mexicans, and, finally, of my Uncle Ajax! What had caused such a situation I could not even guess, but a cry of joy escaped my lips and I spurred on to the group at the door, tumbled out of my saddle and grabbed my uncle's hand.

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

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Mrs. Toplofty—"That is largely true."

Tramp—"Yes, mum. Neither do I, mum, an' so I thort I'd drop in to take tea with yeh, mum."

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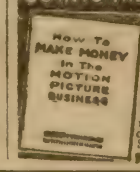

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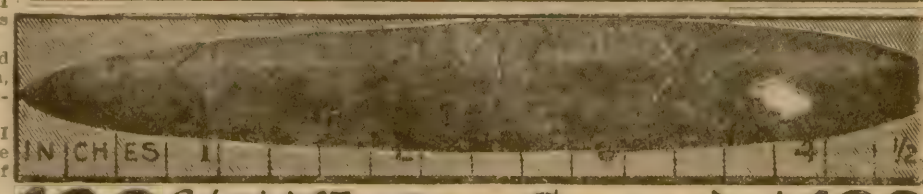

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FOOT REMEDY COMPANY, 3557 West 26th Street, Chicago, Ill.

Chicago Ledger

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COPIES WEEKLY.

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There are more blockheads than wooden legs.

Play is merely work that you don't have to do.

Follow the undertaker and he'll put you in a hole.

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If men had to do the housework they would live in tents and use paper dishes.

Some men would rather meander along the crooked path than go home sober.

Love doesn't make the world go round as often as it makes the lover go broke.

The Orchid Hunters

Or, Lost in Terror Land

By Captain Jack Judson

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CHAPTER IV.

HOW FESTUS FARED.

IT WAS no wonder that a sudden chill struck to Rolla's heart when he discovered that Festus, whom he had left at the foot of the orchid tree, was gone.

The hideous body of the man-ape lay where it had fallen, and already thousands of the stinging red ants of the tropics were swarming over it. Rolla scanned the ground on every side. There were no signs of a struggle so far as he could see, but he felt that his companion had not wilfully deserted him, but had fallen into danger of some kind.

The deserted boy forgot the valuable prize he had secured at the risk of his life; indeed, the butterfly orchid had ceased to have charms for him. His whole mind was bent on finding what had become of Festus. It was not to be thought for a moment that the missing youth had gone back to the camp. Festus was the most faithful of comrades, and would not play deserter, and therefore Rolla was alarmed from the moment he discovered that he was gone.

All at once his eyes alighted on an object that gave him a start, and he pounced upon a curious thing which he recognized as the arrow of a blowgun. This was the slender spine of a little palm delicately pointed and about fifteen inches long. A soft down of the silk cotton tree was twisted round the arrow so as to make it exactly fit the tube of tne terrible blowgun used by the Magdalena savages, and Rolla knew that the needle-like point of the shaft was poisoned.

He actually shuddered as he held it in his hand. It told him as no words could have done that Festus had fallen into the hands of the natives, that in some manner he had been surprised before he could give an alarm, and that by that time he was far away on his journey to a terrible captivity which was likely to end in death by torture.

For the lone boy to think of these things was agony. Strange to say, the gun which he had left on the ground when he ventured after the orchid had not been disturbed, and he could not contrive how it had escaped the roving eyes of the Indians. Perhaps they were so overjoyed at capturing Festus as to miss the rifle, and Rolla, catching it up, hugged it to his breast a moment and then sought the trail.

He had not been unattentive to forest signs since leaving the haunts of civilization, and his keen young eyes soon discerned a perceptible trail, for the Indians seemed not to have covered it. From what he could make out the band was not large, and he was soon pushing deeper into the forest, searching the ground as he proceeded.

The trial led away from the camp, and for this he was glad, for if the natives had found it, it would have been plundered of all its treasures, and the expedition would have utterly failed.

As he could not imagine how Festus had been captured, we will go back and see.

For some time after being deserted by Rolla, the boy left on guard at the foot of the tree waited for his return. He heard him in the dense foliage overhead, and longed to look upon the butterfly orchid that had charmed them.

He did not dream of any enemy until he heard a footfall behind him, and when he abruptly turned around he found himself face to face with half a dozen almost naked natives, whose bodies were tattooed in a most remarkable manner. All were armed with blowguns, and several carried small game that had fallen victims to their skill with this strange weapon.

Festus felt his blood run cold. Resistance, as he well knew, would avail him nothing, for he was outnumbered, and besides, he knew that to shout for help would get Rolla into the same toils that menaced him.

One of the savages carried a bow, and he fitted an arrow to the string, and drawing it to the barb, covered Festus with the shaft by an action more forcible than words. Festus was thus secured without a struggle; the Indians gathering around him with many gestures and odd jargon, which he did not comprehend. His weapons were taken possession of, and in another moment he was hurried from the spot in a summary manner, and found himself surrounded by his captors.

For some time the march was slow, for the forest was dense, but all at once it opened into an almost treeless region, and the gait was increased into a trot.

Festus thought of a thousand things. What would Rolla say when he descended from the tree and found him gone? What would he do? Would he abandon him to his fate and seek the camp, hoping by his own exertions to escape from the terror land?

Beyond the open land the forest lay once more, and into it the band plunged. Festus had not been bound in any manner, his captors taking it for granted that he could not escape, for the first break would subject him to the deadly blowguns, but they watched him like hawks, and kept him in their midst.

In the cooling shadows of the jungle the band came to a sudden halt. They seemed in no haste to reach their village, wherever it was, and Festus was grateful for the stop.

During the march he had closely observed his captors. They were lithe, copper-colored natives, all perfect athletes and all wearing necklaces of tapir teeth and bird claws. But Festus saw more than this. In the Indians' hair were ornaments that glittered, and upon close inspection he discovered that they were emeralds. The stories of famous emerald mines in that region again recurred to him. The Indians must have access to them, and he resolved if ever he got out of durance he would look for this amazing wealth.

Among the natives was a youth of his own age, a strong fellow whose tattooing was grotesque. A serpent had been traced on his breast, with the tail hanging down his back, and on his arms were little alligators done in the highest style of native art. The Macusis boy stole many a sly glance at Festus, and whenever he was caught doing so, his eyes dropped to the ground and he turned his face away.

"I don't believe the boy is a real foe," thought Festus. "He has kindly eyes, and there is something sympathetic about him, but I know I dare not trust these wild men too far."

The halt in the forest was suddenly disturbed. All at once the Indians sprang to their feet and snatched up their weapons. Something was pushing through the tangle of bush and vines, and suddenly a thrilling sight broke upon their vision.

A huge tapir rushed into sight, and upon his back sat a jaguar which had sprung upon him from the bough of a tree. The poor tapir had tried in vain to rid himself of his enemy, and even now was seeking to do so. But the great tiger-cat of the tropics had sunk his teeth into the tapir's neck and was trying to bring him down.

Almost straight into camp dashed the frightened animal. The Indians were shouting at the top of their lungs, and more than one bow was bent by the jungle hunters. An arrow pierced the jaguar's hide, another struck the tapir in the neck, but neither proved effective.

Festus threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired at the clinging cat. There was an unearthly screech, the mottled body of the jaguar leaped into midair and toppled to the ground, while the poor tapir, relieved of its burden, kept on with a grunt of joy.

The savages whirled upon Festus and stared at him in amazement. That a weapon like the one he carried should prove more deadly than their arrows was a surprise. It was probably the first gun they had ever seen.

While the Indians were looking at the wound made by the steel-pointed ball, Festus remained in his tracks, scarcely knowing what to do. The savage boy stood near him eying him curiously and with a smile on his face. Suddenly the Macusis youth pointed back over the route they had just traversed.

Festus took the hint, for the gesture had thrilled him, and, inwardly breathing a prayer for safety, he bounded away before the Indians could recover. He ran as he had never run before, though the forest impeded him and he did not know whether his course was leading him back to Rolla or not.

He was making good headway when a hidden creeper caught him about the feet and he went headlong to the ground, landing in a clump of spiny plants whose sharp points were driven into his flesh.

Despite the pain he lay still, for there were sounds of racing and shouts behind him, and while he lay still he saw the whole band dash past in swift pursuit. For ten minutes he did not move. The noises died away, and the forest about him grew silent.

"It's an ill will that blows no one any good," said the boy to himself. I may have to thank these thistles, after all."

When at last he ventured to raise his head for observation, he suddenly ducked, for an object was slowly moving toward him. He clutched his weapon with desperation and peered through the bushes.

It was not a Macusis that he saw, but the huge, slow-moving body of the great ant-bear, the oddest creature that infests the tropics. It came on with its peculiar gait, its hinder parts elevated above its fore ones, and evidently searching for

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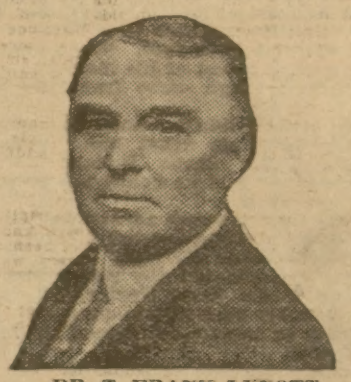
You will agree when you have used it that it dissolves and drives out uric acid poison. It tones the kidneys so that they work in harmony with the bladder. It strengthens the bladder so that frequent desire to urinate and other urinary disorders are banished. It stops rheumatic aches and pains immediately. It dissolves uric acid crystals so that back and muscles no longer ache and crooked joints quickly straighten out. It reconstructs the blood and nerves so that you soon feel healthier and stronger, sleep better and eat better and have energy throughout the day. It does all this and yet contains nothing injurious and is absolutely vouched for according to law.

Sufferers from these dreadful and dangerous diseases can surely afford to spend a few minutes each day for a few days to demonstrate to their own satisfaction if they are curable, especially when you consider no expense is involved, and I



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willingly give you my time and my medicine. All any fair-minded afflicted person wants to know is if a certain thing will relieve HIM or HER, and here is an opportunity to find out without cost, obligation or important loss of time. THESE FEW DAYS may be the turning point in your life.

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1—Pain in the back.
2—Too frequent desire to urinate.
3—Nervousness, loss of flesh.
4—Pain or soreness in the bladder.
5—Weak, watery blood.
6—Gas or pain in the stomach.
7—General debility, weakness, dizziness.
8—Pain or soreness under right rib.
9—Swelling in any part of the body.
10—Constipation or liver trouble.
11—Palpitation or pain under the heart.
12—Pain in the hip joint.
13—Pain in the neck or head.
14—Pain or soreness in the kidneys.
15—Pain or swelling of the joints.
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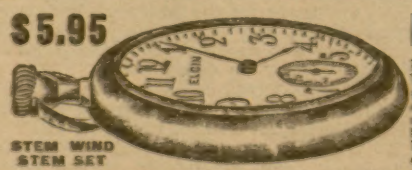

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an ant hill where it could get a square meal.

The next moment Festus heard a noise to his right like the bursting of a little firecracker, and the ant-bear had the dart of a blowgun in his side. Festus involuntarily turned his head and gasped. The Macusis boy was standing within ten feet of him!

CHAPTER V.

ASISSO.

FESTUS wondered if the Macusis boy had seen him. He saw the lad walk forward and stand beside the dying ant-bear, lightly touching the butt of the dart with his bare foot. The young Indian seemed proud of his marksmanship. A guttural laugh came from the boy's lips.

"He could guide me back to camp—if I only dared to trust him," reasoned Festus. "But these Indians are so treacherous," and he continued to watch the coppery boy.

Suddenly the youth turned on his heel and came straight toward Festus. The white lad cocked his rifle.

"Huh!" ejaculated the young Macusis, looking down upon Festus, whom he had probably seen all the time, and then a gleam of merriment leaped up in his dark eyes.

Finding further concealment useless, Festus rose to his feet and faced his discoverer.

"I wish I could talk Spanish like Rolla," he said to himself. "Then I might bargain with this young fox."

"Maco!" exclaimed the Indian, striking his breast.

"So you're Maco?" answered Festus. "Well, I'm Festus Blade. I wish we could strike a bargain. I don't know your lingo, and you don't know mine. Just now I wish there was a universal language in this world."

The Macusis nodded. Five minutes later the two boys were threading the mazes of the tropical forest together, Festus treading in the Indian's tracks, but all the time watching him narrowly.

"Festus! Festus!" suddenly rang out a well-known voice, and Rolla was seen coming forward.

The two boys embraced as if they had been separated for years.

"Who's this?" demanded Rolla, turning upon Maco.

"One of my captors; but ask him."

Rolla tried Spanish on the young Indian.

"Maco is a Macusis," answered the native. "White boy here fall into the hands of Asisso and his warriors. When they all sit down the tapir comes through the forest with the jaguar on his back. White boy kill jaguar and then runs away."

"That the whole story in a nutshell, Rolla," put in Festus. "I couldn't have told it better myself. You got the butterfly orchid."

"But I had to fight for it," observed Rolla, with a smile. "I'm going to ask Maco about Prelie."

"Do. I'd like to know what became of the girl."

Rolla turned to the young Indian again. A cloud seemed to settle over Maco's countenance.

"Prelie," said he, "is doomed. She shot the big white crane with her arrows. She must die."

"That is if they catch her," smiled Rolla.

"The feet of the Macusis are fleet," with a shake of the head. "They will find Prelie, unless she finds the emerald cave and hides there."

"Then the cave is lost?"

"Lost! lost!" sighed Maco. "It has been lost many moons. It is full of the green stones."

"And no doubt worth more than all the orchids in this terror land."

The boys now turned their footsteps toward the camp, and reached it in due time. It had not been plundered, for

The Macusis advanced.

which our young adventurers were thankful. Maco took leave of them with a grunt and soon vanished.

"Well, I'm glad we're back," cried Festus, shuddering at his adventure. "I guess those rascals would have made short work of me if I hadn't taken French leave. But your butterfly is wonderful, Rolla."

"Worth four thousand at the least," answered Rolla, proudly casting a look at the flower. "But listen!"

The boys were on their feet in an instant. Through the forest came a low, dull roar.

"Heavens! it is the piorocca!" cried Festus, growing pale. "It will be down on us in a flash."

The dreadful wind which is the terror of the tropics was increasing in velocity. The whole forest seemed to tremble. Frightened animals were already rushing before it, jaguars, tapirs, deer; and birds of every description were flying screeching from the impending danger.

"To the ground!" shouted Rolla.

The breathless boys dropped to mother earth and caught hold of some swaying bushes. In an instant dense darkness prevailed. Great trees, torn from their roots by the storm fiend, were made playthings for the terror, and nothing stayed its course. Now the boys were lifted in midair, and now hurled back to the ground, as if they were in the grasp of a maddened giant. Every thought was a prayer for safety.

As suddenly as the piorocca had burst upon them its vengeance ended. The sun came out and revealed the destruction which lay on every hand.

"Where did this come from?" suddenly exclaimed Festus, stooping over something that glittered at his feet.

It was the most beautiful flower they had ever seen, an orchid whose petals really shone like a diamond sheen in the glowing sun.

"Must have been loosened by the storm," Rolla remarked. "Unfortunately there is nothing but the flower, no roots. See, Festus!" He was holding the orchid up to his companion's gaze.

"It may not have come far?" said Festus. "From the way the wind came, its home must have been near the river. Let us go and look."

They pushed through the wreck toward the stream, and soon stood on the tree-strewn bank.

"A boat!" cried Rolla, pointing to a native corial that had been thrown up by the tempest. "Now, if we only had paddles——"

Something that whistled through the air broke the sentence. It imbedded itself in a tree just back of them—an arrow painted red from barb to feather, long, lithe, and deadly-looking. The boys stared at it in silence.

"It was meant for us," said Festus, at last, in terrified tones.

"And woe to the wretch who sent it, if I find him!" cried Rolla.

"I don't think you need look long," grinned the other, "for yonder he stands."

Sure enough, the Indian who had unloosed the arrow was in plain view, a magnificent specimen of wild manhood, with tattooing all over his body and a headdress of toucan feathers on his long black hair. He was carelessly fitting another arrow to his bow, and Rolla covered him with his rifle.

"No," said Festus, restrainingly. "Don't open the battle, Rolla. Maybe the fellow will talk."

The Macusis advanced, still holding the arrow against the bowstring, and never for a moment taking his eyes from the young orchid hunters.

"Who?" said he, in gibbering Spanish.

"People who don't shoot poisoned arrows at their fellow men," testily answered Rolla. "Who are you?"

"Asisso," was the reply.

"Ho! the chief of the party who captured me," exclaimed Festus. "I recognize you now."

"Where are your companions?" asked Rolla.

The Indian crossed himself.

"The strong wind killed them," said he. "Asisso is alone."

"Then come to the camp and be friendly," continued the boy. "We should not be foes."

The Macusis came nearer and unstrung his bow in sign of amity.

"I don't like his looks," whispered Festus, sidling up to Rolla. "I see evil in his eyes."

When the camp was reached, the Macusis sat down and took from a leathern pouch which he carried a handful of emeralds, which caused the two boys to exchange looks.

"This region must be full of emeralds!" commented Festus, starting at the sight, whereupon Asisso turned to Rolla with a nod.

"Asisso can show white boys where the pretty stones are," said he.

"What does he say, Rolla?"

Rolla explained.

"It is not far off," continued the Macusis. "The lost cave is near."

"But you wouldn't take us to it?"

"Asisso will show the white boys where the stones lie."

"What do you think of that, Festus? He says the mine is near, and that he will show us."

"But he may lie."

"If he lies his life won't be worth the snuffing of a taper," almost hissed Rolla.

After a short conversation Asisso agreed to lead the way to the emerald cave, and the young hunters were soon treading at his heels.

Not a mile from the camp great hills broke the variety of the landscape, and all at once the guide paused. His hand pointed forward.

"I see nothing," said Festus.

"The hole," grunted the Indian, and a few steps further on all saw an opening in one of the rugged hills.

"I guess he's all right," said Rolla, turning to his comrade. "But how are we to get out of this tangle land with the emeralds?"

It was a dark opening that the Indian revealed by pulling aside some shrubbery, and he fell back and pointed proudly into it.

"It's too dark to explore the mine without a light," suggested Rolla, proceeding to make a torch out of some resinous twigs which he ignited with a match, and they followed Asisso into the cave.

On, on they went, the torch flaring in a wind that came from some unknown quarter, till all at once it was seized and dashed to the ground.

"We are betrayed!" cried Festus. "We are surely doomed by this tropical fiend!"

The only response was a demoniac laugh that had a thousand echoes, and the boys stood still and held their breath.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGE GUIDE.

THE gloom that prevailed in the cave was stygian. Rolla and Festus realized as they stood together that they had trusted the cunning Macusis too far. It was his hand that snatched away the torch and left them confronting—they knew not what.

"Quick!" cried Rolla, as the sound of flying footsteps still vibrated on their ears. "Follow the traitor. His footfalls will lead us from the trap," and both boys turned and rushed through the darkness, jostling each other in their precipitance.

But their efforts were without avail. They brought up against what appeared to be a solid wall, and went down in a heap.

When they scrambled to their feet they were surely at their wits' end. The trap into which they had been led seemed a labyrinth of doom. For a long time they groped about, for whenever they tried to light their lucifers a wind from an unknown quarter dashed them out, and they at last desisted.

"If we only had the thread that Perseus used in the Grecian fable, we might find our way out," said Festus, dolefully, "but we are not that lucky. No doubt the rascal Asisso will plunder the camp and leave us utterly helpless in this demon land."

They rested a while to collect their

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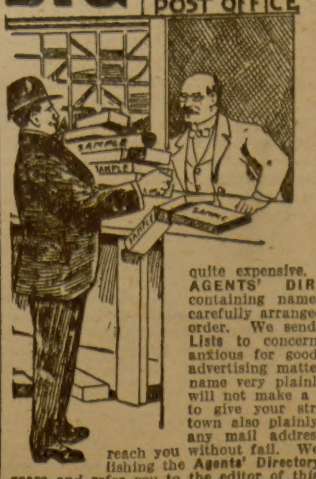

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thoughts, and then plunged on, in hopes of finding an outlet toward the back of the cavern.

"Horrors! What was that?" and Rolla, who was in the lead, recoiled, nearly throwing his companion off his feet.

That the noise which both heard at the same moment emanated from the throat of some animal was apparent, and they stood breathlessly waiting for a repetition.

"Perhaps some beast has taken refuge from the storm," suggested Rolla, scarcely above a whisper.

The same cry was suddenly repeated, and so near that the young orchid hunters involuntarily retreated and cocked their weapons.

"Try another match," cried Festus.

Rolla did so, shading the light with his hand as it flared up, and holding it above his head, he bent forward with every sense on the alert.

"Look, Festus!" he nearly gasped. "We are not the sole occupants of this place."

Indeed they were not. Crouched within a few feet of them, and eying them with terrible eyes, was an immense jaguar that lashed the air with his tail.

"Now!" said the boy with the light, "give him a ball between the eyes."

Festus was not slow to obey the command, for his rifle leaped to his shoulder, and the cavern was filled with the roar of the discharge. There was an answering cry of fierceness, and something bounded over their heads and scampered away in the gloom.

"Well," said Festus, "we got rid of the enemy, at any rate. Now we may have rest."

"But other dangers may lurk in this retreat," was the reply. "If one jaguar knew how to find the cave, others may have followed his example."

Fearing there might be offsets in the dire place, they advanced cautiously.

"I don't believe this is an emerald mine," Festus said at length. "It isn't likely that Asisso would reveal such to his enemies. From what I remember to have read of the gem mines of Colombia, the treasures are not found in such places."

Rolla did not answer.

"Something is coming this way," Festus suddenly went on. "I can hear it."

The orchid hunters hugged the nearest wall and waited. Something was approaching. They could discern the heavy footfalls and hear now and then a singular sound like heavy breathing.

All at once something brushed their bodies. They would have pushed their way into the wall if it had not been almost adamant, but they could go no farther than they were. The "thing," whatever it was, had stopped directly in front of them.

"It is a beast of some kind," breathed Rolla.

"A tapir, mayhap."

The unseen object suddenly moved on.

"Come; we will follow," Rolla resumed. "It surely knows the way out and ——"

"Keep at its heels," interrupted Festus. "We must trust almost any guide now."

The lumbering movements of the animal were sufficient to keep the boys on the right road, and all at once Rolla clutched his comrade's arm.

"The sunlight, Festus!" he exclaimed.

Sure enough there was light ahead, and a minute afterward they saw a big tapir dash from the cave and rush grunting through the forest.

"I'd reward the old fellow if I could," joyfully cried Festus. "Never again will I shoot a tapir, no matter what provocation I may have."

They were now out of the trap, thanks to the animal which had sought refuge underground from the tropical tempest, and the sun was illuminating their surroundings.

Of course Asisso was not in sight. That wily demon had sloped away, believing, no doubt, that he had put an end to the boys, and they felt that he would tell his story in the savage camps with the greatest gusto.

"The old grudge against that Indian will hold good forever," ejaculated Festus, with indignation. "I long to get a chance at his head. I will never forget him, but when we meet again, as I hope we may, I will deprive the forest of one pest."

The way back to the camp was made without incident. To their joy it was found undisturbed, Asisso for some reason failing to plunder it. Perhaps he was content with entrapping the orchid hunters, and had gone back to his wild companions.

Our young adventurers thought they had had adventures enough for one day, and after a meal threw themselves on the ground and prepared to rest.

"We'll take the boat we saw at the river," said Rolla, ere they fell asleep to the music of countless birds and the perfume of flowers. "By drifting downstream we must reach a settlement of some kind."

All at once both boys found themselves sitting up on their soft couches. The forest in front of them seemed alive with singular-looking animals resembling pigs. Their numbers were increasing, and Festus and Rolla sprang up and looked at the strange sight.

"A band of peccaries!" cried the latter. "We shall now have to deal with another pest."

The piglike marauders approached, pushing forward their sharp snoots and glaring at the boys with evil in their little eyes.

The peccary is the wild pig of the tropics, and when he roams in bands is a foe much to be feared. Woe to the man who gets in their way, for they will run him down and destroy him in a moment. In a way they are as dangerous as the wolves of the Russian steppe, and when they have treed a victim they will camp beneath him and literally starve him out.

As the pack neared the two boys they bristled up, showing that they meant to be aggressive, and Festus and Rolla fell back and cocked their rifles.

"There must be five hundred of them," Festus said. "They will overrun everything, and are bent on mischief. There won't be a morsel of the camp left, if these little devils have their way."

"And they are getting reinforcements all the time!" cried Rolla. "I think all the peccaries in South America are in our front."

There seemed nothing for the boys to do but to "tree," and with a final glance at the porcine army, they took to two adjacent trees and ensconced themselves in goodly forks out of reach of tooth and hoof. Their retreat was greeted by the animals with snarls of rage, and in a jiffy the whole pack was underneath.

"I guess we've stolen a march on the pests," laughed Festus. "They can't reach us here."

"But look! They are making havoc in the camp."

This was true. The peccaries, as if to make up for the escape of the boys, had turned to the camp, and were rooting up everything with savage vengeance. But not all the herd had engaged in this looting. One-half remained beneath the trees, glaring at the boys, whom they hoped to starve out, as though they felt assured that no help could come from any quarter.

In vain did our young adventurers fire down into the impish mass. Others took the place of those killed, and there was no diminution of their assailants.

"It's a game of freeze out," grinned Rolla, in no good humor. "We will have to remain here till the peccaries get tired of their job."

The long day began to wane, and still the piggy host remained on guard. The little eyes lost none of their fierceness, and the tusks of the herd were licked in anticipation of a human feast.

But as the shades of night gathered the peccaries suddenly fell back.

"Well, they're going," cried Festus, much relieved. "I wonder what has frightened them?"

"Yonder is your answer!" Rolla exclaimed. "We are jumping from the frying pan into the fire."

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

Woman's Tongue.

It was in Ireland that the witty saying originated, "Silence is a fine jewel for a woman, but it is little worn."

This is one of the mildest of the innuendoes with which woman's tongue has been visited among all nations. In fact, one legend has it that Eve was created dumb, but that Adam "an aspen leaf from the devil he gat," and placing this beneath her palate she forthwith spoke and has been talking ever since.

The Chinese say: "A woman's sword is her tongue, and she does not let it rust," while the Hindoos have a proverb, "For talk I'm best, for work my elder brother-in-law's wife." The old English adage has it: "A woman's strength is in her tongue."

The prejudice against too much talking has been mirrored in many proverbs, for even the African savages say: "If a woman speaks two words, take one and leave the other," while in the Orient, where woman is held in little esteem they say, "A woman's talk—heat from grass," which signifies that there is little in it.

Even the artists of the olden time had to make fun of woman's tongue, though they could not paint exquisite beauty without her form. One of the ancient British inns had a sign picturing "The Good Woman," and while originally this referred to a saint who had lost her head through her persecutors, and she was therefore painted headless, in later times the sign was interpreted as "The Silent Woman," and popularly it was held that the only silent woman was the one without a head.

The Germans have a quaint saying: "When a woman has no answer, the sea is empty of water."

The French say: "Foxes are all tail, and women are all tongue." It was a current Alsatian proverb: "If you would make a pair of good shoes, take for the sole a woman's tongue—it never wears out."

Not Personal.

Sheridan Knowles once wanted a certain book and could not get it. A friend advised him to try a circulating library. This advice Knowles took, to the extent of paying three months' subscription at a library of which the proprietors were Saunders & Ottley, and then went into the country, where he stayed three months without drawing a book. Returning to town, he called for the book, and was informed that his subscription had expired. At this he was very furious. He had paid a guinea, he said, and had nothing to show for the outlay. Referred by the clerk to one of the proprietors, he denounced the affair as "a confounded swindle." The proprietor then asked him if he intended to be personal. "No," replied Knowles, "on the contrary, if you are Saunders, d—n Ottley, and if you are Ottley, d—n Saunders."

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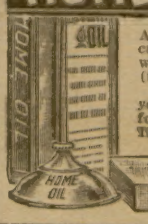

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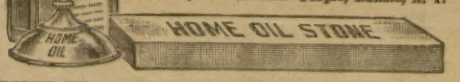

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